ROUTLEDGE CLASSICAL TRANSLATIONS

CTESIAS' HISTORY OF PERSIA

TALES OF THE ORIENT

LLOYD LLEWELLYN-JONES AND JAMES ROBSON



ROUTLEDGE

CTESIAS' *HISTORY OF PERSIA*

At the beginning of the fourth century BCE Ctesias of Cnidus wrote his twenty-three book *History of Persia*. Ctesias is a remarkable figure: he lived and worked in the Persian court of the Achaemenid monarchs and, as a doctor, tended to the world's most powerful kings and queens. His position gave him special insight into the workings of Persian court life and court politics.

His *History of Persia* was completed at a time when the Greeks were fascinated by Persia and seems, on one level, to cater to a contemporary Greek interest in Persian wealth and opulence, powerful Persian women, the institution of the harem, kings and queens, eunuchs, and secret plots. However, Ctesias' work is more than simple palace gossip; it is suggested here that Ctesias was attempting to write something quite new: a history of Persia from the inside, a Persian account of the past.

Presented here in an unabridged English translation for the first time with an extensive introduction, *Ctesias'* History of Persia*: Tales of the Orient* offers a fascinating insight into Persian history and re-evaluates Ctesias' legacy as a historian of the ancient Near East.

Lloyd Llewellyn-Jones is a Lecturer in Ancient History in the School of History, Classics and Archaeology at the University of Edinburgh. His research interests include Persian and Greek cultural history, ancient gender, and the reception of antiquity in popular culture. He is the author of *Aphrodite's Tortoise: The Veiled Women of Ancient Greece* and the forthcoming *King and Court in Ancient Persia.*

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Ctesias' History of Persia: *Tales of the Orient*
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CTESIAS' *HISTORY OF PERSIA*

Tales of the Orient

Lloyd Llewellyn-Jones and James Robson

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Lloyd Llewellyn-Jones
James Robson

PREFACE

We are delighted to have had this opportunity to work on a long-neglected and long-misunderstood text and to present it in a modern translation to students and scholars of classical antiquity. This work is very much a collaborative effort, coming from two individuals with diverse (and yet shared) interests: the study of Greek language and literature, and the history and society of ancient Persia and its reception by the Greeks. As such we expect this book will appeal across the board to a wide audience of literary and historical scholars. We certainly hope that we are filling a gap in providing this English translation of Ctesias' *Persica* and that it will be of use as much in the classroom as to researchers into Greek and Persian cultures.

We have endeavoured to give an accurate and lively translation of the work in its most complete form: that is to say, including fragments and testimonia of the *Persica* that have only been attributed to Ctesias in the last few decades. For many this will be their first introduction to Ctesias' work, while others, already familiar with the Greek text, can utilize this book alongside other scholarly editions in French and German where they will find a more extensive *apparatus criticus*. Our intention was to create a modern English translation of the text to raise awareness of Ctesias; we feel we have achieved this.

The publication of this book is timely. A new trend in scholarship is developing: a move is afoot to rehabilitate Ctesias. Increasingly, he is losing his 'also ran' designation as a poor-man's Herodotus, and is being valued on his own terms. This coincides with a more general reaction to Persian history, where academics are re-evaluating the approaches taken to Achaemenid scholarship over the last three decades.

Ctesias' History of Persia*: Tales of the Orient*. We have chosen our title carefully and we hope that it reflects accurately our approach to this extraordinary work. 'Tales' we have chosen to reflect the

multifaceted approach Ctesias has to the retelling of history; 'Orient' because we want to claim back the appropriateness of using the term, devoid of any prejudice or preconceptions. 'Orient' here means the East.

Lloyd Llewellyn-James
James Robson

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INTRODUCTION

Ctesias of Cnidus is a little known figure. If he is remembered at all it is, at best, with puzzlement, at worst, with scorn. Why? Because, frustratingly, Ctesias has left us with one of the most enticing yet most baffling of all literary works from Greek antiquity: his *Persica*, or 'History of Persia'. Ctesias' relative anonymity also resides in the fact that, while his fragmentary works have been discussed amongst scholars since at least the latter half of the nineteenth century, general readership of Ctesias in the English-speaking world has been denied. Ctesias has been available in German and French translations for some time now and most recently Dominique Lenfant has produced a masterly French translation and commentary of all the known Ctesian fragments, which is set to be the standard point of reference for future scholarship on Ctesias.[1] However, a comprehensive English translation of Ctesias' complete *œuvre* has yet to appear.[2] This book aims to go some way towards addressing the hindrance faced by students, by providing an English-language translation of all the available material from the *Persica*.[3]

Certainly when compared with the names of the 'greats' of Greek history writing – Herodotus, Thucydides, Xenophon, and Plutarch – Ctesias is often regarded as small-fry, a historian of little consequence.

1 Lenfant 2004. For a recent translation into French of the *Persica* see Auberger and Malamoud 1991.

2 Wilson 1994 provides sections of the *Persica* and the *Indica*, but only extracted from Photius' *epitome*. For a complete critical edition of the *Persica*, with English translation and commentary, we can expect much from Stronk, forthcoming.

3 The fullest, up to date, bibliography on Ctesias is provided by Irene Huber at: www.achemenet.com/document/BERKTOLD_Ktesias-Bibliographie_10-02-09.pdf (accessed 25 February 2009); also published in Wiesehöfer, Lanfranchi, and Rollinger (eds), forthcoming 2009.

A potted history of his life is given by Diodorus Siculus (which we will take at face value for now):

> Ctesias of Cnidus was around at the time of Cyrus' expedition against his brother Artaxerxes, was taken prisoner and, having been taken into service by the king because of his medical knowledge, enjoyed his esteem for a full 17 years.
>
> (2.32.4 [Testimonium 5])

The 'position of honour' enjoyed by Ctesias relates no doubt to his role as court doctor to the Great King and the Persian royal family, for Ctesias was a medical man by profession and probably worked as a doctor during the time he was writing his literary works in Persia and back home in Greece. A huge undertaking, Ctesias' *Persica* was twenty-three books long and was one of antiquity's undisputed bestsellers, being mentioned by over fifty ancient authors.[4] It is a considerable blow, therefore, to realize that today only scattered fragments of the text survive, while others are preserved in *epitomes*, summaries of passages that probably retain little of the text's original flavour (see below).

Perhaps because of its fragmentary condition, Ctesias' *Persica* has suffered a poor reputation at the hands of modern historians of Greece and Persia.[5] Reared on the imperative *Histories* of Herodotus, scholars have tended to concentrate their criticisms on the discrepancies found between Ctesias and Herodotus and often confirm the Herodotean model of history to be the apposite one, relegating Ctesias to the also-ran of Greek history, at most a 'woeful correction of Herodotus'.[6] Ctesias certainly set himself in opposition to Herodotus (Testimonium 8), but this is not likely to have had an effect on his choice of subject matter: a sweeping history of the Near East from its origins down to the reign of Artaxerxes II. Ctesias was writing something different from Herodotus; the *Persica* is a very original work based on a combination of personal observation and the plentiful information he learned from the rich oral tradition embedded within the Iranian court, and a healthy dose of Greek inquisitiveness

4 Lenfant 2004, CLXI.

5 Study of Ctesias is on the rise, however, and he has certainly benefited from a scholarly interest in two areas that have direct bearing on his work: the study of Achaemenid Persia, and the study of the ancient Greek novel. See Wiesehöfer, Lanfranchi, and Rollinger, forthcoming 2009.

6 Drews 1973, 106.

about their Eastern neighbours wrapped up, undoubtedly, in some semi-mythology too.

But how did these elements of fact and fantasy converge to produce this 'history' of Persia? To answer this, let us think a little more laterally about the double nature of approaching history as fiction and fiction as history.

CTESIAS AND 'THE LAST KING OF SCOTLAND'

In 1998 Giles Foden's novel *The Last King of Scotland* received the prestigious Whitbread First Novel of the Year Award and reached the UK's best-selling list (its success was followed by an Oscar award-winning movie adaptation in 2007). The book is, in essence, a historical novel, that is to say a semi-fictional story rooted in historical fact. Told in the first person, Foden's *The Last King of Scotland* follows the exploits of a young Scottish doctor, Nicholas Garrigan, who leaves the mundane security of his Fifeshire home town, and the threat of a dull future as a local GP, to work in the decidedly more challenging Western charity hospitals of Uganda. Here fate deals Garrigan an unexpected hand when he meets and administers basic medical aid to Uganda's newly created President, Idi Amin Dada, one of the twentieth century's most notorious and feared political figures. Because of his naive love of all things Scottish, Amin gave himself the moniker The Last King of Scotland.[7]

The story follows Garrigan as he is unwillingly thrust into Uganda's political arena when he is appointed as Amin's personal physician, having the responsibility for overseeing the dictator's health and the well-being of his immediate family of three wives and numerous children.[8] Garrigan's close access to Amin's person, and his private and often very confidential tête-à-têtes with the President, soon puts the doctor at the heart of Ugandan policy-making. British agents based in Uganda, fearing Amin's often erratic foreign and domestic policies, begin to coerce Garrigan into helping them advance British interests within the country. This includes persuading Garrigan to

7 Idi Amin also gave himself the title His Excellency President for Life, Field Marshal, Al Hadji Doctor Idi Amin VC, DSO, MC, Lord of All the Beasts of the Earth and Fishes of the Sea, and Conqueror of the British Empire in Africa in General and Uganda in Particular. For a discussion of Amin's obsession with royal titulary and pomp see Ambrose 2008.

8 Amin fathered 40 legitimate offspring from his five wives. Jaffa Amin, the tenth son, is currently writing a book to counter his father's negative reputation.

administer a draught of poison to Amin, a request that at first horrifies the doctor, but which he later feels compelled to carry out.

But close access to Amin proves to be a double-edged sword. While Garrigan benefits from the lavish gifts, titles, and prestige bestowed on him by the ruler, he also has to suffer Amin's increasingly demented outbursts, and bears the brunt of his ferocious paranoia on many occasions. Amin trusts nobody within his inner circle and soon his tyrannical tendencies come to the fore, with the arrest and executions of numerous ministers of state, not to mention the cruelties he inflicts upon the Ugandan people *en masse*. Moreover, Garrigan has to contend with the domestic strife within the dictator's household, as Amin's wives fight for position and attempt to protect their children from the machinations of their co-wives and from Amin's own bullyboy domestic violence. Garrigan launches into a dangerous sexual relationship with Amin's young wife, Kay, and when the infidelity is exposed Kay is executed. Her mutilated body is put on display to serve as a public warning that Amin will brook no resistance, especially from his own kin. Garrigan too experiences the dictator's rage head-on; he suffers gruesome torture at the hands of Amin's henchmen.

The final section of the novel is set against the historical incident at Entebbe Airport when, on 27 June 1976, Air France flight 139, originating in Tel Aviv, was hijacked by Palestinians and forced to land in Uganda. On board were 260 passengers and crew, many of whom were Israeli. Amin graciously allowed the release of all non-Israeli passengers before a squad of soldiers from Israel rescued most of the hostages with the minimum loss of life. In the novel, Garrigan escapes from Uganda with the first batch of released hostages. In the safety of his Scottish home he writes the memoirs of his Ugandan 'captivity'. He reflects on the nature of his experiences and on the vagaries of absolute power.

There are interesting parallels to be found between Giles Foden's *The Last King of Scotland* and Ctesias of Cnidus' *Persica*. A brief outline of some of those parallels might render the reading of Ctesias a little more clear.

One of the main debates about Ctesias revolves around the question of whether Ctesias is a good historian or a bad historian, or if, indeed, he can be called a historian at all. This study will suggest that Ctesias can be read as a serious historian at times – although he has a bigger agenda than straightforward 'history' writing – and that his 'history' needs to be read in a different way from that which modern scholarship regards as 'serious' history. History is nonetheless present in the *Persica*, although one has to filter it through other literary genres that

interweave throughout the narrative. Fiction and history look very much alike, particularly when fiction is intentionally set within a literary context and when its fictional plot subsists on actual historical events. This book will suggest that Ctesias mingles history and storytelling together in such a way that his *Persica* has within it elements of a novel, like *The Last King of Scotland*.

On the most obvious level, within the two narratives themselves, Ctesias and Nicholas Garrigan (here filtered through Giles Foden's imagination) are doctors working within foreign regimes who become imprisoned in restrictive (if gilded) cages and eventually escape. Both doctors claim to write a first-person account of their experiences, putting contemporary eyewitness events into a much wider historical context. As authors, both Ctesias and Giles Foden use similar techniques whereby real 'history' and fictitious 'history' are interwoven. The two authors populate their works with fictional characters, with characters based on real-life people, and with bona fide historical personages. No attempt is made to distinguish the real from the imaginary. For these narratives to work as a re-telling of 'history', the fact and fiction of the story must converge and fuse. The reader does not necessarily question when fiction morphs into fact, nor when factual evidence is stretched or otherwise adapted by fictitious elements of the author's imagination; he is invited to assimilate varied measures of fantasy and reality without compromising his integrity in pursuing 'history' of a sort. When Giles Foden wrote *The Last King of Scotland*, he drew not only on his own experiences of living in Uganda and other parts of sub-Saharan Africa to add colour and flavour to the text (a motif that we will find employed by Ctesias too), but also interviewed many individuals associated with Idi Amin's regime and even members of Amin's family. As a journalist, Foden consulted the primary historical records and the scholarship on Ugandan history written before, during, and after Amin's rule and he interviewed many of those who watched and participated in the Ugandan ruler's eight-year regime. The author evokes the form of a memoir by inserting fictional newspaper articles, journal entries, and authentic events.[9] But it was not Foden's objective to write a straightforward (if critical) account of the Amin dictator-

9 During a 1998 interview with the online magazine *Boldtype*, Foden said he based parts of Garrigan's character on a man named Robert Astles who was an associate of Amin. As a British soldier who worked his way into Amin's favour, Astles was much 'more proactive' than Garrigan, according to Foden, but paid the price by spending six and a half years in a Ugandan jail after

ship. Foden wanted to place *himself* – the authorial voice – within the text and to put an emotional spin on the historical picture, as well as create a coherent cultural picture of African life from his own experiences. The final result is a thrilling novel dealing with the highs and lows of human nobility and savagery. But it is also a story very firmly rooted in its historical locale. While not supported by academic footnotes or an extensive bibliography, *The Last King of Scotland* gives the reader a *version* of late twentieth-century Ugandan history. Whether or not one chooses to believe Foden's depiction of President Amin depends on the individual reader's engagement with the text itself. The reader must ask if Foden's Amin is a grotesque caricature of an absolute ruler. If so, then why is he portrayed this way? Is it to propel the story and excite the reader? Is the grotesqueness of the character used to play up the polarity between 'barbaric' Africa and 'civilized' Britain? If this is the case then the character of Amin might be working on a par with similarly distorted depictions of 'despots' like Xerxes or Cambyses which, inspired by xenophobia, are routinely found in classical literature. But the reader has to question if Foden's Amin is actually an accurate portrait of a man who holds total power and wields authority by what might be seen, in some quarters, as unorthodox means. Could Foden be providing his reader with a *de facto* depiction of absolute rulership? Perhaps the 'true' Idi Amin is to be found somewhere in the middle of these polar opposites.

However one decides to interpret the figure of President Amin or the nature of Ugandan history according to Giles Foden, *The Last King of Scotland* is nonetheless a text in which the reader comes to view African history though an unexpected, but nevertheless authoritative, lens. For some readers, the historical details and explorations contained in *The Last King of Scotland* may satisfy their curiosity for Ugandan history enough that they will never pick up another book about African history again. For others it may stimulate further investigation, through travel literature, other novels or through reading history 'proper'. Other readers may dismiss the history contained in the book as pure hokum, but enjoy the book's thrilling narrative nonetheless.

Foden's historical novel operates on several planes simultaneously. Ctesias, it will be suggested, operates in a corresponding way. His aim was not solely to write a history of the Near East, but to meld the legendary aspects of Eastern history (especially in terms of fictitious

Amin's fall. See: www.randomhouse.com/boldtype/1298/foden/interview.html (accessed 19 March 2007).

or semi-fictitious characters) with personal observations of recent historical events and to add to it local colour and flavour. A decidedly melodramatic, almost poetic, use of narrative storytelling completed Ctesias' mix. Like Foden, Ctesias explores analogous themes to advance the 'historical' narrative: exaggeration, romance, adventure, first-hand observations, hearsay, dialogue and reported-speech, speculations on the nature of absolute rulership, stories of executions, murder, intrigues, torture, and observations on national and international events from the domestic (but royal) heart of government. The *Persica* clearly highlights differences between Greeks and Persians in an 'Us' and 'Them' ideology central to Greek expectations of history writing, but (it will be argued below) without making the Persians into stereotyped barbarians. No doubt Ctesias made concessions to his Greek readers by explaining or using Greek concepts to make the Persians more understandable, more acceptable, possibly. The resulting melange is not necessarily palatable to modern historical tastes, since this is clearly not *pure* history. Felix Jacoby, no admirer of Ctesias (as we will go on to explore), intended to criticize him when he called Ctesias 'one of the fathers of the historical romance'.[10] But perhaps the designation should not be seen in such derogatory terms; perhaps Jacoby's slur can be reapplied with a positive gloss. In terms of literature, Ctesias' *Persica* is an unusual, possibly innovative, approach to the past, which clearly pleased and stimulated readers, like Photius, in antiquity:

> This historian is both very clear and simple. For this reason his writing is enjoyable . . . And he does not take his narrative off into inappropriate digressions like Herodotus.
>
> (Testimonium 13)

It remains to be seen whether Ctesias can still be appreciated in the same way today, but it is hoped that this English translation of the *Persica* will at least allow students to approach Ctesias for themselves and to draw their own conclusions about the validity of his history. We shall return to this theme later.

I. CTESIAS OF CNIDUS: A LIFE

In order to assess Ctesias' contribution to our knowledge of, and engagement with, Near Eastern history, it is important to put him

10 Jacoby, *R.E.* XI s.v. *Ktesias*, col. 2033.

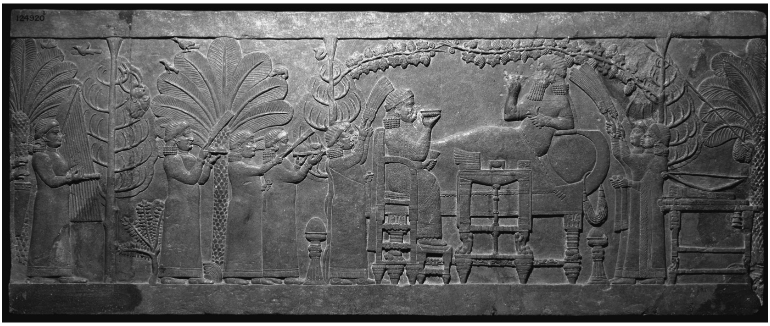


Figure 1 Representations of Persian royal family life, such as that shared by Darius II and Parysatis, are unknown, but an image like this – a relief from the North Palace of Ashurbanipal, Nineveh (*c*.645 BCE) – gives perhaps a glimpse of the refined family lifestyle of Achaemenid royalty. The panel probably decorated one of the Assyrian King's private apartments and shows Ashurbanipal banqueting with his queen. Photograph © The Trustees of the British Museum.

into his own historical context and to produce, as far as we can, an outline of his life in which we might be able to plot the disparate influences on his composition of the *Persica*. What we know of Ctesias the man is contained in scattered ancient sources conveniently assembled under the heading 'Testimonia', so called since these sources testify to the outline of his life and the content and style of his work. Typical of these is the Suda, a tenth-century Byzantine dictionary that contains many details about ancient writers. Of Ctesias it briefly notes:

> Ctesias, son of Ctesiarchus or Ctesiochus, from Cnidus, doctor, who attended Artaxerxes – called Mnemnon – and wrote a History of Persia in 23 books.
>
> (Testimonium 1)

It is, however, worth noting that the Fragments of the *Persica* afford some information about Ctesias' life too, since he places himself within the main narrative of the work. As we will see, he describes the treatment of the Great King's wounds after the Battle of Cunaxa, and states that he served as an ambassador between Artaxerxes, Evagoras, Pharnabazus, and Conon; he also records how he acts as a messenger between Queen Parysatis and Clearchus. And while we do not know if Ctesias used the first or third person in his composition of the *Persica*, we can say that in its last four books, at least, Ctesias'

own presence in the narrative was clear to see.[11] The *Persica* therefore contains an element of autobiography within its structure.

PERSIA IN THE TIME OF CTESIAS: THE ROAD TO CUNAXA

Before examining Ctesias' life, it is worth putting him into context and briefly mentioning the kind of world he operated in, at the heart of the vast Persian Empire. Ctesias' arrival in Persia (see below) coincided with a violent upheaval at the centre of the Persian political system, a commotion that was created through sibling rivalry. The Great King Darius II (r. 424–404 BCE) was aging and was preparing for his eventual succession. The Persian royal inheritance system did not promote the model of primogeniture, but permitted the monarch to nominate as his successor whichever son he felt worthy of the throne. This had led to vicious succession struggles already in the preceding generations (and would continue to the end of the Achaemenid dynasty), but the succession of Darius' heir was a particularly thorny issue. Darius II's sister-wife and chief Queen, Parysatis, had produced numerous healthy sons and daughters for the royal nursery. The two eldest sons, Arses (or Arsacas according to Photius, F50 §51 and Arsicas according to Plutarch, F15a §4) and Cyrus (named after his illustrious ancestor and known to history, therefore, as Cyrus the Younger), got the bulk of the attention. Parysatis had a particular fondness for Cyrus, but King Darius favoured Prince Arses and began to groom him for the throne.[12] Deciding to keep Arses close to him at court, the younger son, Cyrus, aged about 16, was sent to Ionia, on the western fringe of the Empire, to act as the royal overseer of the troublesome and powerful satraps Tissaphernes and Pharnabazus. These two great individuals frequently pursued their own policies and sometimes clashed with one another; Cyrus was instructed to exert his royal influence over them. He was also charged with dealing with the barbarians to the west – the Greeks.

Athens and Sparta were locked in (what turned out to be) the final stages of the Peloponnesian War (431–404 BCE), but the war had spilled over into Ionia, because the Athenians were desperate to preserve their grain supply from the Black Sea via Ionia to Athens.

11 For a discussion of the first or third person narration see Marincola 1997, 185, n. 56. See also Marincola 1997, 134.

12 On the family of Darius II see Briant 2002, 612–620.

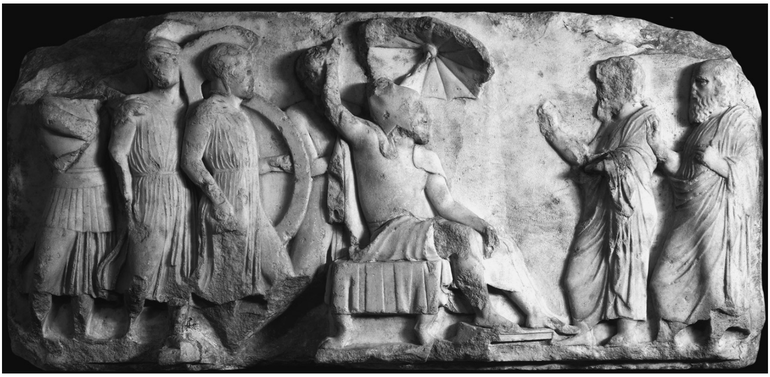


Figure 2 A Persian satrap, his head crowned with an upright tiara (*kidaris* or *kitaris*) and protected by a parasol, receives an embassy of Greeks. This stone frieze from the Nereid Monument, from Xanthos in southwest Turkey (*c*.385 BCE), is carved in a decidedly Greek style, although the subject matter, the audience scene, emulates court ritual from the Persian heartland. Photograph © The Trustees of the British Museum.

The Spartans wanted to block the grain supply. Hoping to wear out both the Spartans and the Athenians, the satraps Tissaphernes and Pharnabazus had supported each side intermittently, until curtailed by Darius' decision to create a more cohesive Greek policy. Cyrus the Younger was meant to coordinate Persian efforts in Ionia.

Cyrus attracted the friendship of Lysander, a Spartan general, and began to pump Persian gold into the Spartan war effort as new warships were constructed and troops were bought. On the back of this, the Persians restated their old claim to the sovereignty of the cities of western Asia Minor, and to back up the claim, Cyrus bought the services of Greek mercenary soldiers, many of whom were garrisoned in the Persian-controlled cities of Ionia.

In the Autumn of 405 BC, just as the Spartan grip on Athens was tightening, Darius II became ill and summoned Prince Cyrus to rejoin the court at Babylon. As a demonstration of his new-found power, Cyrus arrived at Babylon with a bodyguard of 300 mercenary hoplites. When Darius died, the throne passed to his eldest son, Arses, who took the throne-name of Artaxerxes II, but the court was immediately plunged into chaos when the satrap Tissaphernes took the opportunity of Darius' recent death to inform the new monarch that his younger brother, Cyrus, was plotting to usurp the throne. Artaxerxes, determined to establish himself as unrivalled monarch, immediately had his brother arrested and imprisoned.

The Queen Mother intervened, however, and begged for Cyrus' life. Persuading the King of his innocence, Cyrus was released and sent back to Ionia to take up his duties once more. Back in the western frontier of the Empire, Cyrus began to muse on recent events and came to realize that his safety lay in ousting Artaxerxes from the throne for once and for all and becoming Great King himself. Therefore, in February 401 BCE, the impetuous 23-year-old Cyrus assembled his troops (some 13,000 Greek mercenaries and 20,000 Anatolian levies) at Sardis, in order to march on Babylon and seize the throne from Artaxerxes.

Marching over the Tauris mountains and through the Cilician Gates, Cyrus and his troops passed through northern Syria into the heartland of Mesopotamia. Artaxerxes, for his part, mustered troops at Babylon and then moved north along the Euphrates to meet Cyrus. In August 401 BCE, the armies of the two brothers met at the tiny hamlet of Cunaxa, just north of Babylon (west of present-day Baghdad).[13] Cyrus charged against Artaxerxes, but was mortally wounded and died. Artaxerxes was brave and fought well, although he suffered a leg wound. His injuries were dressed by his personal physician, Ctesias of Cindus.

BIRTH AND FORMATIVE YEARS

Born around 441 BCE, Ctesias worked as a doctor-cum-author during the late decades of the fifth and early decades of the fourth century; he was active in 401 BCE during the rebellion of Cyrus the Younger and, if we follow allusions within the *Persica*, then he was alive in 393/2 (Fragment 71 [158–158]).[14] There is some disagreement as to the exact name of Ctesias' father (Testimonia 1, 2, 11), although all sources agree that Ctesias was born in the city of Cnidus, one of the most important cities in Greek-speaking Caria in Asia Minor (modern-day southwest Turkey). The city was well-known for its doctors and Ctesias appears to have belonged to the Cnidian school of physicians, which was allegedly founded by Asclepius, the god of medicine, himself. As an Asclepiad – and therefore a relative of Hippocrates (Testimonium 4) – Ctesias seems to have studied, and possibly practised, medicine at Cnidus and even when the doctor turned historian in later years, his interest in medicine stayed with him. The fragments and testimonies of Ctesias display enough

13 On Cunaxa see Bassett 1999.
14 For the date of his birth see Brown 1978.

references to the practice of medicine to suggest that Ctesias' medical concerns had an impact on his historical and ethnographic vision.[15]

INTO PERSIA

The exact time and reason for Ctesias' arrival in Persia is unknown. Diodorus Siculus (Testimonium 3) suggests that Ctesias arrived in Persia as a prisoner of war, although the validity of this report is uncertain and some scholars have rejected the idea, preferring instead to see Ctesias invited and received graciously at court by Artaxerxes II, because of his medical skills, some time around 405/4 BCE.[16] He is attested at the Battle of Cunaxa in 401 BCE, when the armies of two royal brothers, King Artaxerxes and Prince Cyrus the Younger, clashed over rights to the throne.[17] While Ctesias may have been in Persia for some time before the battle, it is unlikely that he took part in Prince Cyrus' campaign against his brother since, according to Ctesias himself (and others), he cared for Artaxerxes when he was unhorsed during combat, and dressed and healed the wounds inflicted on the king by his brother (Testimonium 6aβ; Fragment 21).[18] This strongly suggests that Ctesias was Artaxerxes' physician before the revolt of Cyrus, and certainly after the battle Ctesias received numerous honours from the King (Testimonium 3, 6b). But exactly what took Ctesias to Persia remains a mystery.

CTESIAS AT COURT[19]

Diodorus says that Ctesias was resident in Persia for seventeen years as the king's physician (Testimonium 5). This comment has caused concern and some scholars prefer to calculate Ctesias' Persian residency

15 Tuplin 2004.

16 Brown 1978; Briant 2002, 264 doubts if he was specifically drafted in by the King because of his medical knowledge. Testimonium 1b suggests Ctesias was taken prisoner by Artaxerxes II *after* the Battle of Cunaxa, where he had fought alongside Prince Cyrus.

17 See Bigwood 1983.

18 Briant 2002, 265 suggests that, 'the tales of the battle are too propaganda-laden for us to place total confidence in Ctesias' account'. See further criticisms below.

19 On the Persian court, see Balcer 1993 and Brosius 2007. On the Empire, generally, see Cook 1983; Gershevitch 1985; Dandamanev 1989; Kuhrt 1995 647–701 and 2007b; Briant 2002; Curtis and Tallis 2005; Wiesehöfer 2009.

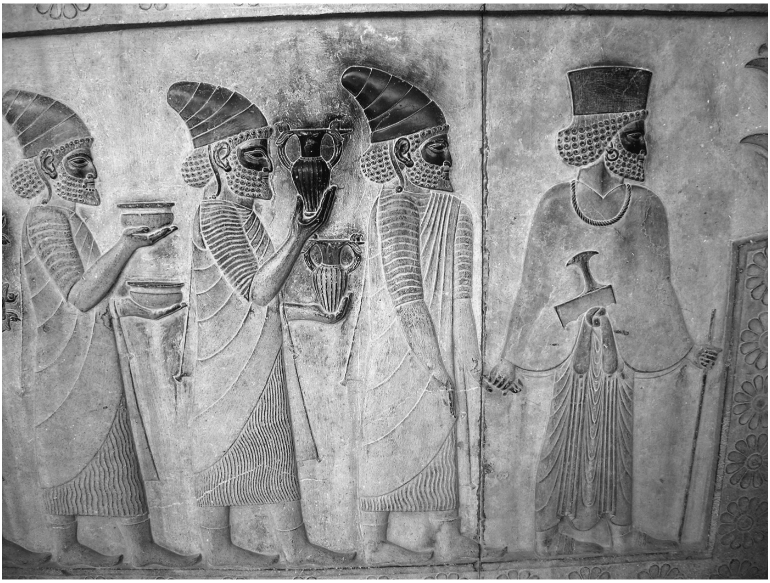


Figure 3 At Persepolis, Darius the Great commissioned a series of carved stone reliefs that ran along the stairways of the Apadana (audience hall) portraying different peoples of the empire bringing their tribute to the Great King. Here, Lydians, wearing Greek-style pleated linen tunics and wool mantles, in addition to their Ionian-style turbans, bring gifts of expensive vessels. The Lydian delegation is headed by a Persian wearing court dress. The Greek presence in the Persian heartland is well attested; Ctesias would have met with numerous Greeks during his Persian residency. Photograph: Lloyd Llewellyn-Jones.

as only six or seven years.[20] However, if we do follow Diodorus on this, given that the *Persica* breaks off its narrative around 398/7 BCE, this would mean accepting that Ctesias arrived at court around 415/14 BCE during the reign of Darius II, although it must be noted that Ctesias says very little about this king in the *Persica* (in fact Darius II shares Book 18 with two other kings: Xerxes II and the short-reigned Secundianus). Rosemary Stevenson has argued that if Ctesias arrived in Persia some time in 405/4, then this would allow for a simple textual emendation from seventeen years to seven years.[21] It has been often noted that Ctesias tends to exaggerate all sorts of

20 For a full discussion of the debates surrounding the length of Ctesias' Persian sojourn, see Stevenson 1997.

21 Stevenson 1997, 5–6.

figures, and that he might have lied about the number of years he spent near the Great King, in order to amplify his own importance and impress other Greeks.[22] But there is little to support this view.

Jan Stronk has suggested that Ctesias was taken captive some time during the revolts of Pissuthnes, satrap of Lydia or the rebellions of his son, Amorges, between 420 and 412 BCE. Stronk opts for 413 BCE as the likely time when Ctesias, serving as a physician in the Greek mercenary army, was captured by Darius II's satrap Tissaphernes and taken back to the Persian homeland where he was presented to Darius' successor, Artaxerxes II.[23] If this is the case, then the years between 413 and 397 BCE equate to seventeen – following Diodorus' claim exactly. This is the most feasible solution.

Ctesias certainly worked as the court physician during this time, although we hear little of his medical practices *per se* in the sources (he chooses instead to stress his intimacy with royalty and his role in international diplomacy). It appears that he cared for Artaxerxes himself as well as for the King's much-loved wife, Stateira, and his revered mother, Queen Parysatis (Testimonium 11d). He may well have been charged with caring for the royal family in general, although perhaps these duties were shared with another Greek doctor, one Polycritus of Mendes, who also seems to have served Artaxerxes as a personal physician – although Polycritus is a particularly shadowy figure (Plutarch, *Artaxerxes* 21.2). The Great Kings had long esteemed the skills of Greek doctors, even more so than Egyptian physicians (such as Udjahorresnet, Semtutefnakht, and Wenen-Nefer, who are attested as doctors at the Persian court), and they had actively sought Greek doctors from around the Empire.[24] During the reign of Darius the Great, the celebrated Democedes of Conon had been captured as war booty and served as a doctor at court (Herodotus 3.122–125, 129). He had reset Darius' sprained ankle (the result of a fall during a royal hunt) when Egyptian court physicians proved useless, and later he cured Atossa, one of Darius' wives (and one of the court's key figures), of an abscess in her breast (Herodotus 3.130). Darius richly rewarded Democedes for his skills: he lived in a fine house in Susa, 'took his meals at the king's table', and allegedly had great influence over Darius (Herodotus 3.130).[25] Another fêted Greek

22 Jacoby *R.E.* XI s.v. *Ktesias*, col. 2032–2037, esp. 2033.

23 Stronk 2004–2005, 102–104.

24 On court doctors, see Stronk 2004–2005, 105 and Griffiths 1987. On Greeks at the Persian court, see Hofstetter 1978, and Brosius Forthcoming.

25 During Darius' Sicilian reconnaissance mission, Democedes escaped from Persia.

doctor was Apollonides of Cos who worked as the court physician during the reign of Artaxerxes I. But his glory turned to infamy (as Ctesias tells it) when he behaved 'unprofessionally' with one of his royal patients, Princess Amytis, the King's sister, and he was executed for his misconduct (Fragment 13a §44).

How far the office of Royal Physician was a voluntary one is debatable. We know that the Egyptian physician Udjahorresnet returned to his native country with the blessing of the Great King after serving at the court of Persia.[26] However, the Greek doctor Democedes arrived, like Ctesias, as a prisoner of war, and escaped the court and fled to Croton where he was protected by the citizens of the city from being taken back to Persia (Herodotus 3.136–137). So Ctesias' august court position may not have been entirely voluntary; this may help explain his later actions in support of Conon, since Ctesias' service to the Athenian leader might have allowed him the chance to finally escape from Persia.

Whatever their level of personal freedom might have been, foreign doctors clearly served an important function at the Persian court, and Ctesias' position at the side of the Great King was no doubt enhanced by the reputation that Greek physicians already enjoyed in Persia. However, if we choose to believe him (and there is no reason not to), Ctesias' own account of Apollonides' punishment for unethical behaviour served as a warning that, no matter how valuable a service they might perform, doctors were nonetheless servants of the Great King and should not overstep their limits.[27] It is probably a lesson that Ctesias took to heart.

In his role of personal physician to the Great King, Ctesias joined in the peripatetic lifestyle of the court as Artaxerxes and his vast entourage made their seasonal progress throughout the Empire, spending time at Babylon, Susa, Ecbatana, and Persepolis (and possibly resting in a myriad of smaller royal residences *en route* between the great palace-cities; Xenophon, *Cyropaedia* 8.6; Athenaeus 12. 513).[28] Perhaps as part of the royal entourage, Ctesias seems to have travelled the great Royal Road, which connected the Empire together: his evocation of Darius the Great's Behistun inscription and relief (which he calls Bagistanus) as belonging to Semiramis suggests that

26 See Lichtheim 1980, 36–41 for the inscriptional evidence from his statue found at Sais.

27 Apollonides of course broke the Hippocratic Oath. See Tuplin 2004 cont. Lollesch 1989, 23, n. 2.

28 See further Briant 1988 and 2002, 184–191, 256–258.

he saw the mountain-side monument as he travelled the route from Babylon to Ecbatana (Fragment 1b §2.13.1–2). Ctesias may have spent considerable time at Babylon following the Battle of Cunaxa, for it was here that Clearchus was imprisoned (Fragment 27 §69) and here too that Parysatis received news of Prince Cyrus' death (Fragment 16 §66, Fragment 24).[29]

The ambience at court during Ctesias' seventeen-year residence became increasingly strained as two court factions developed: on the one side was Parysatis and her favoured younger son, Cyrus, whom she wished to advance to the throne (Plutarch, *Artaxerxes* 2.2,4) and on the other was Artaxerxes II, his wife Stateira and the satrap Tissaphernes. As the decisive year 401 approached, so tensions at court increased, but it is difficult for us to know if Ctesias was partisan to one faction or the other. He served the king well at Cunaxa and was subsequently rewarded and honoured (Testimonium 6b), but in the immediate aftermath of the battle his loyalties might have been tested. Ctesias appears to have enjoyed the favour of Parysatis who may have honoured him as a type of confidant (Testimonia 7aβ, Fragment 27 §69). Certainly with the Queen Mother's encouragement, Ctesias treated Clearchus kindly and with dignity. Clearchus, one of the leaders of the Greek mercenary troops who had loyally supported Cyrus the Younger in his revolt against Artaxerxes, had been captured after the battle by the machinations of Tissaphernes and was imprisoned.[30] Ctesias, eager to please his royal patroness (who was keen to honour the memory of her beloved Cyrus), established a good relationship with the imprisoned Greek general and, in return for his kindness, Clearchus gave Ctesias a signet ring as proof of friendship (Testimonium 7aβ, Plutarch, *Artaxerxes* 18.1–4). After Clearchus' execution (possibly at the prompting of Stateira), Ctesias describes a series of divine signs that appeared at his burial mound (Fragment 27 §71).

Following the death of Cyrus the Younger, the treachery and violence at court escalated and Parysatis pursued her vendetta against her eldest son, his wife, and supporters to a macabre conclusion. Again we know nothing of Ctesias' position at court during this time, but Plutarch (Testimonium 7d) implies that Ctesias falsified a letter

29 Parysatis had a Babylonian mother, Andia (Fragment 15), and maintained lands in Babylonia; see Briant 2002, 461. She may have felt a particular attachment to that part of the Empire. After all, it was to Babylon that she chose to retire from court following her (short-lived) disgrace at the death of Stateira (Plutarch, *Artaxerxes* 19.6).

30 Briant 2002, 630–634.

from Artaxerxes to Conon of Athens so that he could undertake a diplomatic mission outside the court and thereby escape from Persia.[31]

CTESIAS THE DIPLOMAT

Whatever the real reason, in 399–397 BCE Ctesias left the Persian heartland for (it is presumed) Cyprus and served as a go-between for Artaxerxes in his negotiations with Conon who, at the time, commanded a Persian fleet in the Aegean under the orders of the Cypriot king Evagoras I of Salamis. Persia was determined that Salamis should resume payment of tribute that had fallen off during Artaxerxes' war with his brother and was anxious to establish a peace within Cyprus and secure an alliance with the island against Sparta's growing sea power.[32] It is not clear exactly what role Ctesias had in these negotiations, but he seems to have passed letters between the main protagonists and may even have penned (or translated) some himself.[33] In the sparse surviving fragments, emphasis is given to letters that Ctesias sends and receives in his own name (§72).

Ctesias must have served Artaxerxes' interest well, because in 397 he was sent (via Cyprus and Cnidus) to negotiate with Sparta. He seems to have been captured by the Spartans in Rhodes where he was tried for serving the interests of Persia; he was acquitted, however, and returned home to Cnidus later in the same year.[34] It is unknown if Ctesias had ever intended to return to Persia.

BACK HOME

In August 394, the Spartans were decisively defeated off the coast of Cnidus and Ctesias may have witnessed Conon's victory. It is around this time that his career as a writer begins. His *Persica* was perhaps created or completed soon after his return to his home town. A book of a geographical nature is known, variously called *Periodoi*, *Periploi* or *Perigēsis*. We know of a one volume ethnographic study of India, the *Indica*, which, despite its far-fetched tales of dog-headed men and *Boy's Own* adventure stories of man-eating tigers, does contain some important information about India before Alexander the Great's invasion. A final work called the *Peri tōn kata tēn Asian phorōn* (*On the*

31 Brown 1978, 17; Lenfant 2004, XVIII.
32 See Briant 2002, 636.
33 See Lenfant 2004, XIV. See further Olmstead 1948, 378–379.
34 See Lenfant 2004, XIX–XXII.

Tributes of Asia) supposedly contained lists of all the tribute paid to the Great King from the various parts of the Achaemenid Empire. The existence of two further works on mountains and rivers (of the Persian Empire, perhaps) is disputed.[35]

During the period in which he created his works, Ctesias may well have continued working as a doctor, for the cachet of having served the Great King at court possibly stood him in good stead in Cnidus. No further details of Ctesias' life are known and unfortunately even the date of his death remains a blank.[36]

II. THE *PERSICA*

THE TEXT

By this point the reader is probably aware that what we know about Ctesias is painfully little. We are further hampered by the fact that what we do have preserved of Ctesias' work comes to us in the form of fragments. These include:

- *Testimonia*: ancient sources that purport to provide facts about Ctesias' life and work.[37]
- *Epitomes*: the name given to a précis of a longer work, a condensed summary, which lacks the kind of embellishments we might expect to find in a full text. Most of Ctesias' *Persica* is contained in *epitome* form; we also know of a lost *epitome* in three books (condensed from the original twenty-three books) made in the reign of the emperor Nero by Pamphile, the daughter of Soterides (Testimonium 16). As things stand today, our knowledge of the *Persica* is provided by two large *epitomes*:[38]

  1 a lengthy *epitome* of *Persica* I–VI by Diodorus Siculus. This is problematic, however, since the Diodoran *epitome* contains

35 Gilmore 1888, 3 tentatively suggests they possibly had been portions of the *Persica*, but this is unlikely.

36 See Brown 1978 for a discussion. See below for a discussion of Ctesias' reception in antiquity.

37 The testimonies are provided by such disparate authors as Aristotle, Diodorus Siculus, Strabo, Photius, Galen, Eusebius, Photius, Xenophon, Pliny, Antigonus of Carystus, Aeneas of Gaza, Dionysus of Halicarnassus, Demetrius of Phaleron, Plutarch, Lucian, Arrian, Aelian, Aulus Gellius, Joannes Tzetzes, and the compilers of the *Suda*. See the Glossary of Authors below, pp. 220–226.

38 The whole of the *Indica* is preserved in *epitome* form by Photius. See Wilson 1994 and Lenfant 2004.

a good deal of material that is most likely not from Ctesias at all.[39] Nonetheless, Diodorus is usually careful to indicate his Ctesian source (2.2.2; 2.32.4).

2 an *epitome* by a Byzantine Christian Bishop named Photius. This is contained in his *Bibliotheca*, a list of his favourite 'must-read' books from Classical antiquity.[40] This covers *Persica* 7–23. It is possible that by the early Christian period a separate edition of the first six books of the *Persica* existed and that the *Persica* had become divided into two distinct (but unequal) halves. Since Photius' *epitome* only begins with Book 7, it has been suggested that the first half of the *Persica* was missing from the copy he used for inclusion in his *Bibliotheca*. The Photian *epitome* is made up of pure, unadulterated, Ctesian material but its coverage of the material is imbalanced (even when taking into account the fact that Ctesias' own text must have been disproportionate in its distribution of space to the time periods covered). The *epitome* of Photius avoids the introduction of any extraneous material, which makes it much more condensed than Diodorus' *epitome*; in fact, the whole of Photius' *epitome* occupies only about the same space as the Diodorus' *epitome*, despite the fact that it summarizes three times more material (seventeen books as compared to six).

Even though only a fraction of Ctesias' work survives in these *epitomes*, the character of the *Persica* becomes clear. But like all *epitomes*, both Diodorus and Photius are likely to have edited out many interesting details.[41] Nevertheless, without the two *epitomes* our knowledge of the *Persica* would be very poor.

- *Excerpts, direct quotations and paraphrases*: Certain sections of Ctesias' *Persica* are retold at length. Nicolas of Damascus, for example, paraphrased the story of the fall of Astyages of Media and the rise of Cyrus the Great in a very full account (which admittedly trails off towards the end). Many briefer quotations and paraphrases are found in the works of Greek, Roman, and Byzantine authors, including Xenophon, Plutarch, Aelian,

39 Fragment 1b certainly includes non-Ctesian material that may be by Diodorus himself.

40 See Wilson 1994.

41 See Tuplin 2004 who attempts (and very successfully too) to penetrate beyond the *epitomes* to discover references to Ctesias' use of medical knowledge and, by extension, ethnography.

> Demetrius of Phaleron, Polyaenus, Athenaeus, Strabo, Stephanus of Byzantium, and Joannes Tzetzes (*Chilliades*). These fragments give us an invaluable indication of Ctesias' language and style, although it must be noted that in the larger scheme of things, 'scarcely a sentence of [Ctesias'] text has come down to us verbatim'.[42]

GATHERING THE FRAGMENTS

Filtering Ctesias through the works of third parties or *epitomes* is clearly a less than satisfactory approach for understanding the original character of Ctesias' work and it is important to remember Jan Stronk's observation that less than a quarter of a page (in modern print) of the *Persica* has survived (in the form of *Papyrus Oxyrhynchus* 2330; see below).[43] While there are four main sources through which the *Persica* is preserved (Diodorus Siculus, Nicolas of Damascus, Plutarch, and Photius), there are another forty authors whose works contain thoughts, stories, and scraps of information taken directly from Ctesias' *magnum opus*.

The task of collecting and collating the disparate fragments of Ctesias, and 855 other little-known ancient Greek historians whose complete works have been lost, was undertaken by the German scholar Felix Jacoby in a monumental work called *Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker* (*Fragments of the Greek Historians*), often abbreviated and better known as *FGrHist* or *FGrH* and published by E. J. Brill in Leiden. Jacoby based his work on that already undertaken by Carl Müller in his Latin translation of the ancient Greek texts called *Fragmenta Graecorum Historicum*, compiled between 1841 and 1870. Jacoby's work was started in 1923 and occupied the rest of his life; when he died in 1959 the work remained unfinished with only three volumes of an intended five-part work completed and published. The first section of the work included the Greek mythographers and the most ancient historians (numbered as authors 1–63); the second section documented the works of the historians 'proper' (authors 64–261); the third part included the autobiographies, local histories, and works on foreign countries or 'ethnographies' (authors 262–856). Volumes incorporating ancient biography, antiquarian literature, and historical geography were never completed. In the published version of Part 3 volume C (1958), comprising authors 608–708, Ctesias of

42 Gilmore 1888, 2.
43 Stronk 2007.

Cnidus is listed as author number 688. All in all, Jacoby includes 74 Ctesian fragments and testimonia in this edition.[44]

In 1972 Friedrich Wilhelm König published *Die Persika des Ktesias von Knidos*, which began to refine Jacoby's edition of the Greek text and incorporated some texts overlooked in the 1958 publication, although König's work did not meet without criticism, at least in regard to his editing of the alternative texts.[45] Yet it was only in 2004 that a major reassessment of Jacoby's text of Ctesias occurred with the publication of Dominique Lenfant's Budé edition of *Ctésias de Cnide: La Perse, L'Inde, Autre Fragments*. In her book Lenfant opts to maintain the numbering system of the Ctesian fragments first adopted by Jacoby while managing to present the fragments in an updated form: whereas Jacoby placed 'parallel texts' in columns on the page, Lenfant places the parallel Greek texts in groups one after the other; the facing page contains a French translation of the texts. Perhaps the most significant merit of the volume, however, is Lenfant's inclusion of several important fragments overlooked by Jacoby. Five sizeable passages (over fifteen pages of Greek text) come from Nicolas of Damascus, and even though Jacoby knew of these fragments, he had omitted them from his edition of Ctesias, mistakenly believing that they were by Dinon of Colophon whose work, it must be said, overlaps with Ctesias' significantly.[46] Lenfant has questioned Jacoby's criteria for the attribution of fragments and argued persuasively for the fragments' Ctesian authorship. In addition to the Nicolas of Damascus fragments, Lenfant has also added to the testimonia and has included passages from Aelian's *Historia Animalium* and *Varia Historia*, since their content shares very close parallels with known Ctesian fragments. The Greek text utilized by Lenfant is based on the most recent editions available and in many cases (certainly with the text of Photius) the author has consulted the original manuscripts herself. She is therefore able to expurgate some of Jacoby's texts as inauthentic and has identified all the fragments that cannot be attributed to Ctesias with any certainty with an asterisk (*).[47]

44 An earlier collection of Ctesias' fragments had been published in 1947 by R. Henry as *Ctésias, la Perse, L'Inde, les sommaires de Photius*. The work gained little academic *kudos* and became defunct after Jacoby's publication in 1958. For a careful critique of Henry, see Lenfant 2004, CXCVII–CC. For her critical but exacting study of Jacoby, CC–CCII.

45 For a discussion of König, see Lenfant 2004, CCIII–CCVI.

46 In Jacoby the disputed fragments are listed as FGrHist 90 F1–5, F66, and are included in Lenfant's publication as F11D*, F1pE*, F6b*, F8c*, F8d*.

47 For a critique of Lenfant's system of classification see Romm 2006. See also Rollinger 2007.

Lenfant's masterful volume will no doubt be the authoritative text for all future research on Ctesias. Therefore this present work has chosen to follow the Greek text edited by Lenfant and to follow her system of fragment numeration.

III. CRITIQUING CTESIAS

CTESIAS' *NATIONAL ENQUIRER* HISTORY

In the latter half of the nineteenth century, the general scholarly verdict on Ctesias' reliability was positive,[48] but by the 1900s, with the fragments and testimonia of Ctesias beginning to be properly assembled and ordered, scholarship started to pronounce on Ctesias' value as a historian in less positive terms. At the turn of the twentieth century, the German historian Eduard Meyer classified the *Persica* as a work 'breathing seraglio and eunuch perfumes, mixed with the foul stench of blood', a theme quickly advanced by Jacoby.[49] Jacoby belittled Ctesias' work as second rate, untrustworthy and valueless – 'gleich Null', as he put it – especially when compared with texts he esteemed for their historical accuracy, like Xenophon's *Anabasis* and *Hellenica* or Thucydides' *History of the Peloponnesian War*.[50] This derogatory opinion had no doubt been formed during Jacoby's early twentieth-century German training in the period's two leading (and complementary) fields of historical research: source criticism (*Quellenkritik* or *Quellenforschung*) and textual analysis (*Textkritik*). Jacoby privileged some key texts, like those of Xenophon and, especially, Thucydides, as setting the standard for ancient Greek historical writing and thereby judged authors outside the exclusive group as substandard. In fact, his criticism of authors whom he classified as 'non-conformist'– Ctesias amongst them – is harsh. For Jacoby, everything Ctesias puts into writing, from the length of time he served as a court doctor to his claim to have used official royal records as his sources, is an exaggeration, an imaginative distortion, or an outright lie, *Skandalgeschichte* – 'Scandal History' – as he called it.[51] Ctesias' *Persica* is thus seen by Jacoby as, in the discerning words of Dominique Lenfant, 'a vain mixture of plagiarism and polemic'.[52]

48 Gilmore 1888. See also Stronk 2007, 41. For a thorough examination of pre-twentieth-century Ctesian scholarship, see Karttunen 1997.
49 Meyer is cited in Murray 2001, 42.
50 Jacoby 1922 *R.E.* XI s.v. *Ktesias* col. 2047.
51 Jacoby 1922 *R.E.* XI s.v. *Ktesias* col. 2059–2071.
52 Lenfant 2007a, 204.

Jacoby's unforgiving criticism of Ctesias was reiterated in later scholarship, especially that of the latter decades of the twentieth century. A. R. Burn judged Ctesias to be reckless with the truth and 'concerned only to make an impression',[53] while N. G. L. Hammond regarded Ctesias as little more than the writer of 'absurd fantasies'.[54] In 1973 Robert Drews' important study *The Greek Accounts of Eastern History* reactivated a vigorous anti-Ctesian movement, which has influenced scholarship to the present day. Drews argued that Greek historiography developed out of the Greek reaction to what he terms the Great Event – that is to say, the defeat of Persia in the Persian Wars (492–449 BCE) – in the plays of Phrynichus and Aeschylus and in various *Persica* written at the time, especially that of Hellanicus of Lesbos (see below). For Drews, the *Histories* of Herodotus, which he regarded as the results of Herodotus' personal travels and investigations in Greece, Egypt, and the Near East, determined a new approach to history: that of forensic investigation. The successful followers of Herodotus – Thucydides, Xenophon, and Polybius, as Drews classifies them – wrote the history of current events; less successful historians found themselves driven to desperate measures in the quest to write something new about past societies and events of which they had no knowledge. Ctesias is characterized as the greatest villain in the anti-Herodotean school since he dared to 'correct' Herodotus' account of the Great Event itself. The results according to Drews are 'inconsequential', little more than puerile tales of the harem intrigues of royal concubines and eunuchs; the Great Event of Greco-Persian history was already to be found in Herodotus and Ctesias, despite his absurd quibbles over Herodotus' interpretation of events, had nothing left to offer. Ctesias may have a fertile imagination, argued Drews, and he possibly knew what history was *supposed* to be, but could not produce it with the masterstroke of Herodotus.[55]

Arnaldo Momigliano, the renowned Italian historian of ancient historiography, pronounced that Ctesias' work was 'disappointing', filled with stories of court intrigues yet curiously lacking in details of Persian administrative systems: 'I find it difficult to understand', he wrote, 'why the severe but appreciative attitude towards the Persian Empire prevailing in the fifth century yielded in the fourth century to a mixture of idealization of dead Persian kings and of

53 Burn 1962, 12.
54 Hammond 1967, 584.
55 Drews 1973, 103–117.

gossip about court intrigues'. For Momigliano, Ctesias showed a staggering 'lack of interest in the realities of Persian political and social organization'.[56]

With their focus on Ctesias as a gossip-monger, historians have routinely classified his work as that of 'petite histoire', a term which, when used in English-speaking scholarship, takes on a derogatory meaning: 'petite histoire' is trivial history.[57] Ctesias is assumed to offer nothing of value and his history is composed of tittle-tattle and pillow talk. His is an 'over-imaginative' elaboration of Near Eastern history, as worthless as it is harmless.[58] Or so it would appear.

In 1983 the inaugural meeting of the Achaemenid History Workshop met at Groningen in the Netherlands and initiated a major revival of Achaemenid studies. Eminent academics specializing in ancient Iranian and Greek history met to discuss the key theme of the conference: was the Achaemenid Empire in decay during the last century of its existence? Chief amongst the assembled scholars were Pierre Briant, Amélie Kuhrt, and Heleen Sancisi-Weerdenburg, names that are linked to nothing short of a revolution in Achaemenid studies. Margaret Cool Root, reflecting on the nature of the Achaemenid History Workshops (ten were held in all), has suggested that the meetings:

> were characterized by serious consideration of specific questions on the nature of ancient Persian history and its complexities broadly speaking, with an explicit emphasis on method, theory and ways of turning the prism of evidence in the hope of gleaning new flashes of light. They stressed gritty working dialogue rather than performance; they empowered younger scholars to join the discourse alongside eminences; they stressed a multidisciplinary approach long before this was a *cliché academe*; and they emphasized product in the form of published papers emerging from the workshops.[59]

Sancisi-Weerdenburg in particular was at the forefront of an uncompromisingly anti-Ctesian school of thought during the Achaemenid

56 Momigliano 1975, 134. See also Momigliano 1969.

57 See Cook 1983, 22. See also Dorati 1995.

58 Asher-Grieve 2007, 324. Although she does credit Ctesias by suggesting that he was merely elaborating on genuine Assyrian (and later) sources.

59 Cool Root, Obituary for Heleen Sancisi-Weerdenburg. www.umich.edu/~urecord/9900/Jun19_00/31.htm (accessed 20 June 2007).

History Workshops of the 1980s, describing the *Persica* as 'poor historical material',[60] on the grounds that it was 'limited to events on a personalistic level'.[61] Her professed focus was on the importance of reading Greek texts on Persia against the backdrop of subtexts and cultural agendas of the original authors. In her estimation, Persia became the quintessential 'Other' of Greek self-identity, a theme later embraced and disseminated throughout the world of Classical scholarship by Edith Hall in her study *Inventing the Barbarian: Greek Self-Definition through Tragedy*.[62] In particular Sancisi-Weerdenburg highlighted the notion of 'Decadence' as the defining feature of Greek conceptions of Persian monarchy, an Oriental despotism defined through the role of harem intrigues and the unorthodox power-plays of women and eunuchs.[63] 'Decadence' became the touchstone of academic debate on the historiography of Achaemenid Persia and, as Simon Hornblower has since recognized, 'Achaemenid scholarship of the 1980s . . . witnessed a kind of anti-colonialist, anti-imperialist reaction comparable to the sloughing-off of "Westerner" mentalities in real-life Iran since 1979'.[64] 'Traditional' Achaemenid scholars such as John Cook, whose *History of the Persian Empire* was published on the eve of the first Achaemenid Workshop, were criticized as unsophisticated in their use of sources, even though Cook's book received praise for trying 'scrupulously to distinguish what is knowable . . . from what is conjecture' and offering 'a careful consideration of all available sources'.[65] Nevertheless, Cook was taken to task for speaking of 'Oriental Empires', with Sancisi-Weerdenburg glossing the phrase as an 'immutable strain' in Persian historical scholarship.[66]

Sancisi-Weerdenburg sees in Ctesias' work an over-fascination with the actions of queens and princesses. She reads into the *Persica* an indulgence on the part of the author for imaginative salacious stories of powerful women and thereby regards his presentation of even a prominent Achaemenid queen like Parysatis – well attested in bona fide Near Eastern sources – more as a literary construction

60 Sancisi-Weerdenburg 1983, 21.
61 Sancisi-Weerdenburg 1987a, 35.
62 Hall 1989.
63 See Briant 1989 and further discussions on the theme of decadence in Lenfant 2001 and 2007b.
64 Hornblower 1990, 94.
65 Williams 1985.
66 Sancisi-Weerdenburg 1987b, 130 citing Cook 1983, 231.

than a historical subject. Within Ctesias' work, however, Sancisi-Weerdenburg perceives something far more dangerous:

> Ctesias might . . . be credited with something really new, something to be found in his work, in my opinion, for the first time in European historiography: the concept *Orient*. The term Orient provokes associations of harems, eunuchs, luxury, intrigues. It has connotations of softness, closeness, indulgence and lack of rigour. To sum this up: it means effeminacy.[67]

It was in 1978 that Edward Said famously broached a theory that scholars could use to explain the negative, exotic, and often erotic vision of the East routinely promoted in western culture. His book *Orientalism* describes a method by which western colonialist discourse has represented the 'colonies' and cultures of the Middle Eastern world as a way of justifying and supporting the West's imperialist enterprise. Put more succinctly, Orientalism is an idiosyncratic European means of representing Otherness. 'The Orient', wrote Said, 'was almost a European invention, and has been since antiquity a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences'.[68] Taking this as her starting point, Heleen Sancisi-Weerdenburg argued that the first proponent of this dangerous vision was Ctesias of Cnidus, an opinion later shared by Pierre Briant who sees Ctesias as 'one of the chief culprits in the success of a very incomplete and ideologized approach to the Achaemenid world. His *Persica* is not without some adumbration of the 'Orientalism' of the modern period, which analyses the courts of the Near East through a haze of very debatable readings, permeated mostly by observations on the murmurs of the harems and the decadence of the sultans'.[69] Briant's mistrust of Ctesias is acute. Thus in his important study

67 Sancisi-Weerdenburg 1987a, 43–44.

68 Said 1978, 12. However, another branch of scholarship rejects Said's definition of 'Orientalism' and argues that the West has always been capable of seeing beyond the clichés of an imaginary East and that the West has, for many centuries, tried to understand its Eastern neighbours through the serious study and exploration of the languages, cultures and societies of the Orient. They say that the negative connotations Said sees in his definition of 'Orientalism' are overplayed, and that the appellation 'Orientalist' should be divorced from the negative connotations that have become associated with it since 1978. See MacKenzie 1995; Macfie 2002; Irwin 2006; Varisco 2007.

69 Briant 2002, 7.



Figure 4 The wall reliefs at Persepolis include several representations of elegantly dressed and coiffured, clean-shaven, men. While scholarly opinion is divided over their identity, the tasks they perform – holding towels, fans, and perfume bottles – and the location of the images – within the private quarters of the place – suggest that they might be court eunuchs. Ctesias' *Persica* is littered with references to eunuchs; Ctesias must have been familiar with these individuals from his residency at court. Raised relief, palace of Darius, Persepolis. Photograph: Lloyd Llewellyn-Jones.

From Cyrus to Alexander: A History of the Persian Empire, he is highly critical of Ctesias as a source, alleging that Ctesias gives us a glimpse of the Persian court '"through the keyhole" as it were', a phrase that suggests Ctesias' *Persica* is constructed out of little more than salacious tittle-tattle of 'What the Butler Saw' appeal.[70]

In a similar vein, Josef Wiesehöfer suggests that Ctesias' preoccupation lies in recording the events within 'a petticoat government full of immorality, intrigues and toadyism',[71] while Lindsay Allen regards the *Persica* as 'a gruesome soap opera' of 'simplified and glamorous morality tales of virtue and disloyalty'.[72] For Thomas Braun, Ctesias is simply 'a monumental liar' who spun stories of diplomatic events and court intrigues 'to magnify his role in them'.[73] The century-long tradition of disregarding, even mocking, Ctesias is deep-seated and since the 1980s this negative attitude has become entrenched in mainstream Achaemenid scholarship as a truism. The effect that the Achaemenid History Workshop has had on Ctesias is to make his so-called 'petite histoire' anathema; he is 'at best an unskilled informant, who has preserved more of the literary tradition than that of the factual history of Persia'.[74]

70 Briant 2002, 265.
71 Wiesehöfer 1996, 81.
72 Allen 2005, 97.
73 Braun 2004, 123.
74 Sancisi-Weerdenburg 1987a, 43.

Beginning in the 1970s, however, Joan Bigwood published some forward-thinking research about Ctesias. She recognized that he was guilty of making atrocious historical blunders and deplorable chronological gaffes, emphasizing that:

> there is nothing in [the] whole account of the [Persian] Wars which could be right and nothing which suggests concern for truth or careful investigation. Instead we have all the ingredients which one associates with Ctesias – reckless army statistics, misidentified characters, simplifications, astounding confusions, chronology which is muddled, some degree of anachronism, and a certain amount of bias.[75]

Nonetheless, Bigwood attempted to distinguish where Ctesias might be considered more accurate or reliable; in other words, in contrast to Sancisi-Weerdenburg's thorough dismissal of Ctesias as a dangerous Orientalist gossipmonger, she attempted to sort out the Ctesian reality from the fantasy. Bigwood is prepared to believe Ctesias when in the *Indica*, for example, he tells of the gifts of two swords he received from the King and the Queen Mother, suggesting that his royal patrons held him in high esteem (Testimonium 3b).[76] Nevertheless, Bigwood's final pronouncement on Ctesias is not favourable: he remains a less than satisfactory historian.

However, even the most cynical of his critics are sometimes forced to admit that, in the absence of other sources, the *Persica* does at least produce some kind of narrative outline of Achaemenid history and therefore has its use. J. M. Cook suggests:

> on balance it seems . . . prudent to disregard [Ctesias] as a serious source, though the narrative of events will be poorer for doing so; and this obliges us to jettison much of the historical information transmitted by later writers who used him as an authority.[77]

Cook did suggest, however, that 'Ctesias' world of eunuch chamberlains and femmes fatales, of poisoning, of exquisite tortures, and vicious harem intrigue gives some reflection of the corruption of the

75 Bigwood 1978a, 36. See also Bigwood 1976 and 1978b.

76 Bigwood 1995, 140.

77 Cook 1985, 206. See also Karttunen 1997, 636: 'He is not a good source, but as we so often have no better sources, even he is of value for our studies.'

royal court', suggesting that credibility might be looked for in the physician's account of the manoeuvrings of life within the royal household.[78] This is a notion that had already been enthusiastically propounded by David Lewis in his lecture series *Sparta and Persia*, delivered at the University of Cincinnati in 1976:

> It is customary to make fun of Ctesias when he attributes great importance to eunuchs and queens, and to say that his point of view is bound to the harem . . . I am myself disposed to take seriously stories of the irrational caprice and wanton cruelty of monarchs. Nothing is reported of Periander, tyrant of Corinth, which does not find ready parallels in well-attested information about Ali Pasha of Iannina at the beginning of the nineteenth century, and, allowing for some differences of institutions, the Persian court will be subject to the same kind of pressures which have afflicted the courts of absolute monarchs down to the time of Stalin.[79]

In other words, Lewis argues that in many ancient and modern civilizations the fundamental nature of absolute monarchy often leads to a form of rule whereby intrigue, ruthlessness, and irrationality, the types of caprice recorded by Ctesias, are routine. Lewis' view is becoming more accepted, and since the turn of this century, there has been a movement to review the validity of Ctesias' court stories. Indeed, by 2001 Oswyn Murray was able to note that a rehabilitation of Ctesias was starting to take place.[80] Most important is Rosemary Stevenson's disagreement with the concept of Ctesian 'petite histoire'. She argues that:

> to reject all court stories as trivial and irrelevant is too sweeping. Some describe major events or events which though themselves insignificant, had far-reaching consequences . . . [Ctesias and other] authors of *Persica* appear to have considered events at court to be important and . . . to have paid considerable attention to the version of events which was circulated.[81]

We will return to this idea later.

78 Cook 1985, 206.
79 Lewis 1977, 21–22; see comments also in Lewis 1980.
80 Murray 2001, 42, n. 57.
81 Stevenson 1997, 45–46.

Stevenson investigates the methodology used by Ctesias and fellow authors of *Persica* in a wide selection of court stories ranging from love affairs with concubines, to regicide, from treason trials and executions to the machinations of royal matriarchs – the very stuff of Sancisi-Weerdenburg's Ctesian Decadence – and makes an important pronouncement:

> Ctesias emerges as potentially an accurate source, party to fairly detailed information and able to write a reasonable description of what he sees and hears without undue bias. Contrary to general opinion he even appears willing to admit his own shortcomings and is not always eager to lie about or exaggerate his own role. His tendency to describe at length events of no major consequence and to include a large amount of apparently trivial detail is a result of his close involvement in the events which he writes and his possession of large amounts of information.[82]

Dominique Lenfant also argues that court intrigues are closely tied to Ctesias' own experience of Persian society and that the reader has no cause to disbelieve the historicity of his accounts of tortures, rivalries, and conflicts amongst the Achaemenid royal family and their courtiers.[83] For Lenfant Ctesias' *Persica* is an intriguing mixture of indigenous Persian traditions, Greek make-believe, personal curiosity, and well-observed historical reality.[84] Even the eminent Oxford scholar George Cawkwell in his recent book *The Greek Wars* is prepared to accept the word of the Photian testimonium on Ctesias, which notes that:

> he says that he was an eye-witness of most of the things he recounts or that, when it was not possible for him to see, he made sure that he personally heard accounts from Persians themselves and that this is how he wrote his history.
>
> (Testimonium 8)

After all, Cawkwell insists, Ctesias had excellent opportunities to see for himself how the Persian court operated. However, despite the positive appraisal of Ctesias' working methods, ultimately Cawkwell

82 Stevenson 1997, 80–81.

83 Lenfant 2004, CXV–CXXVII; 2007a, 205.

84 See in particular, Lenfant 2004, CXXIII.

suggests that Ctesias' 'performance fell far wide of his professions'. He notes the many chronological howlers encountered in the *Persica* and as a final point he pronounces Ctesias to be 'a great disappointment'.[85]

IV. (DE)CONSTRUCTING CTESIAS

In what ways is Ctesias a disappointment? And to whom is he disappointing? The general consensus suggests that 'serious' historians are apt to disregard his style of history as less than authoritative because of its preoccupation with what is termed 'petite histoire'. A similar perception had for a long time coloured the readings of Plutarch; he too suffered the reputation of being a poor author of history 'proper', far removed from the periods he investigated and reliant on secondary source materials. His *Parallel Lives* in particular were often regarded as highly suspect historical sources, dwelling as they do not on political historical narratives but on moral tales of exemplary virtues (or vices) in the careers of famous men. Plutarch devotes his attention to the birth, childhood, and formative education of his heroes, spinning anecdotes that display aspects of the development of their characters in relation to climaxes or changes of fortune in their lives. The *Parallel Lives* were long regarded as woefully inadequate sources for history but more recent scholarship has reassessed Plutarch's 'historical' writings and as our understanding of his methods and aims have deepened, so the appreciation of his sophisticated style has grown. Today Plutarch is no longer regarded as a marginal historian, but a skilled author whose work is worthy of serious study.[86]

Plutarch's rehabilitation grew out of a more measured scholarly estimation of his work, an opinion that developed over the course of several decades of research. Learning to read Plutarch in the manner he originally intended allowed us to see the inherent value of his particular style of historical enquiry. Can a similar scholarly process make Ctesias into a more respected ancient source?

As for Plutarch, so we must ask questions of Ctesias: what exactly was he writing? How should we classify his work? Is it a corrupt Orientalist fantasy? Is it a morality tale? Is it history? To begin to understand the *Persica* we need to attempt to contextualize Ctesias'

85 Cawkwell 2005, 14–15.

86 A good overview of Plutarch's relationship with history is provided by Pelling 1998 and 2002. See also focused comments by Duff 2003, 112.

writing both in terms of the broader picture of Greek and Near Eastern investigations into the past and of how Ctesias himself might have conceptualized his work.

CTESIAS' UNICORN AND CTESIAS' PARROT

In her short entry on Ctesias in the *Oxford Classical Dictionary* Heleen Sancisi-Weerdenburg notes, unsurprisingly, that, 'both in antiquity and modern times his work has been found unreliable'.[87] But this is not quite true. We have already seen that modern scholarship is divided on the level of Ctesias' dependability; ancient criticism of Ctesias is similarly divided. The picture is more nuanced than is usually acknowledged. If we look at the following table, we can see clearly how opinion on Ctesias varies in the Testimonia gathered together by Jacoby and others. The chart below records specific comments made by ancient authors on Ctesias' trustworthiness or fallibility.

Testimonia: Credible Ctesias	*Testimonia: Implausible Ctesias*
T11d. Plutarch	T7b. Plutarch
T11e. Plutarch	T11a. Strabo
T11gγ. Aelian	T11b. Strabo (*Indica*)
T11j. Tzetzes	T11c. Strabo (*Indica*)
T15b. Plutarch	T11f. Aristotle (*Indica*)
	T11fβ. Aristotle (*Indica*)
	T11fγ. Aristotle (*Indica*)
	T11g. Arrian (*Indica*)
	T11gβ. Arrian (*Indica*)
	T11b. Lucian (*Indica*)
	T11hβ. Lucian (*Indica*)
	T11hδ. Lucian
	T11i. Aeneas Gazaeus (*Indica*)
	T19. Aulus Gellius (*Indica*)

At first glance it appears that the majority of ancient authors who comment on Ctesias view him in a negative light: the number of citations listed under the heading 'Implausible Ctesias' far outweigh

87 Sancisi-Weerdenburg s.v. *Ctesias* in Hornblower and Spawforth (eds) 1996.

those listed under the banner 'Credible Ctesias'. Moreover, it becomes clear that some authors, found in the two columns of the chart, have an ambiguous attitude towards Ctesias' work. Plutarch in particular regards him as a both a self-promoting liar (Testimonium 7b) and as an eyewitness to actual events (Testimonium 11e). Most importantly, those authors who are most vocal in criticizing Ctesias' reliability do not comment on the *Persica* at all, but on the *Indica* – Ctesias' investigation into the Indian subcontinent drawn from the vague source materials available to him at the Persian court. In the table above, where authors commenting specifically on the unreliability of the *Indica* are clearly marked out, it quickly becomes apparent that most ancient authors reserved their censure for Ctesias' decidedly fantastical *Indica* – or 'Indian Marvels', as the work might better be termed. The *Indica* rightly belongs to a genre of writing known as *Thaumata* – 'Things to Marvel At', or 'Wonders' – collections of remarkable information on rarities, abnormalities, and marvels of the natural or man-made world. As such, the *Indica* is very different in style and content from the *Persica*.[88]

The *Indica* may have been written during Ctesias' Persian sojourn. India's close proximity to Persia and the fact that its northern regions were, at times, part of the Empire suggests that Ctesias actually drew upon Persian traditions about its half-mythical neighbour. From the fantastical India of the (Persian?) imagination Ctesias describes pygmies, dog-headed men, and eight-fingered warriors. Ctesias is also the first author in western literature to describe the fabled unicorn:

> The Indians have wild asses . . . the body is white in colour, the head purple, the eyes dark blue. On the forehead they have a horn, one cubit long, the lower part of which . . . is pure white, while the uppermost part, which is pointed, is dark purple, and the middle is black.
>
> (*Indica* 48b)

Ctesias' claims to have seen 'Indian things' himself may mean that he had viewed Indian objects and perhaps met Indians at the Persian court. It is also possible that Ctesias came in contact with merchants and other travellers from India. This might explain his description of, and wonderment at, a parrot:

88 See Hansen 1996, 2–22. See also Bigwood 1989 and Marincola 1997, 22. An excellent introduction to the nature of India in Greco Roman literature is provided by Parker 2008, 13–120.

> which has a human voice and language, and is about the size of a hawk; it has a purple head and a black beard; its body is dark blue, but it is the colour of red cinnabar round the neck; it speaks Indian like a human being, but if it learns Greek then it speaks Greek very well.[89]
>
> (*Indica* 45a)

In a recent analysis of Ctesias' reliability as an early geographer and zoologist of India, Chris Lavers notes that, 'tellingly, when he writes about real things he usually does a good job' and suggests that his account of an Indian elephant, for example, is precise.[90] Taking stock of the work as a whole, Lavers comes to the conclusion that:

> The *Indica* [is] a rich and strange mish-mash of Eastern geography, zoology, botany, medicine, anthropology, and nonsense that has enchanted and infuriated scholars ever since [its composition]. In *Indica* Ctesias describes dog-faced people, fountains filled with liquid gold, mountain-dwelling griffins, tribes of one-legged men . . . and much else of wonder besides. Not surprisingly, scholars . . . have branded Ctesias a fantasist and liar. If the nonsense in *Indica* came from Ctesias' imagination then the good doctor was indeed a fantasist and a liar, but if he simply wrote down exotic travellers' tales then we must judge him an honest, if perhaps gullible, reporter . . . That Ctesias was a little gullible . . . is not surprising, considering that the *Indica*'s topic was the most mysterious of all lands . . . The more we learn about Eastern myths and legends in antiquity, the more Ctesias' tales make sense . . . It turns out that many of Ctesias' stories can be traced to Indian epics, sacred writings, folk-tales, and real animals and plants . . . His book on India is indeed fantastical in parts, but it is probably a mostly honest rendering of stories from and about the East that were current in Persia in the late fifth century BCE.[91]

In actuality, many later Classical authors (principally zoologists and paradoxographers) regularly fell back on utilizing Ctesias' Indian material for their own ethnographic investigations and thereby

89 For a full discussion of Ctesias' parrot, see Bigwood 1993b.

90 Lavers 2009, 6. See also Bigwood 1993a.

91 Lavers 2009, 5, 28.

preserved the fragments of his *Indica*.[92] While it was commonplace for ancient authors to criticize earlier sources rigorously, it was much rarer for them to praise a good work; in the pre-Hellenistic world sources regarded as trustworthy and secure were usually passed over in silence. Even Aristotle, generally no great admirer of Ctesias (Testimonia T11f, T11fβ, T11fγ), nevertheless silently utilized the *Indica* for his own work on Indian fauna.[93] In this context the absence of criticism of the *Persica* might be revealing. It is for the *Indica* that Ctesias has been blighted with the bad reputation as a liar.[94] The *Persica* in fact receives little negative comment from ancient authors; Ctesias himself comes across as less of a liar and more as credible reporter.[95]

FILTERING CTESIAS

The impression we have of Ctesias writing embroidered tales of romantic intrigue ('bodice-rippers', we might suppose) is no doubt exaggerated by the choices made by later authors like Photius and Plutarch who exploited the *Persica* for their own ends – and in particular to make the most of stories of 'the wealth and power of the Persian rulers, and stories of court corruption and intrigue'.[96] It is unlikely that sensationalism surged through all of Ctesias' mammoth work; in fact Photius shows that Ctesias also dealt with the routine facts and figures associated with 'proper' history, since he attempted to enumerate the parasangs and staging-posts on the route from Ephesus to Bactria and India, as well as listing the names of monarchs of Assyria and Persia down to the reign of Artaxerxes II (Fragment 33 §76). This suggests that the *Persica* contained more factual information than the epitomists or later authors cared to use. It has even been suggested that Ctesias' lost work *On the Tributes of Asia* would have given contemporary readers 'scholarly' information on the nature of the Persian Empire.[97] Indeed the surviving fragments show

92 Karttunen 1980, 1989 and 1997, 637.
93 Karttunen 1997, 635, n. 2.
94 See Marincola 1997, 82.
95 See Stronk 2007, 27: 'we should consider the fact that neither Nicolas of Damascus nor Diodorus, Plutarch nor Photius (to mention only the major transmitters) offers us sufficient and indisputable evidence regarding the content of the *Persica* to be able to criticise Ctesias as a faulty and careless historian.' For a good discussion of a more general change in Persian historiographic scholarship see the important comments of Harrison 2008.
96 Kuhrt 2007a, 563.
97 Lenfant 2007a, 205.

that Ctesias was not simply interested in retelling tales of court intrigues and, as Lenfant advocates, the *Persica* was actually a work of surprising contrasts.[98]

It is important to remember that later authors selected parts of the *Persica* for specific purposes and that these selections may be contextualized in a way that transforms the original meaning of the text.[99] P. A. Brunt has observed that, 'Fragments and even *epitomes* reflect the interests of the authors who cite or summarize lost works as much as or more than the characteristics of the works concerned'. He also suggested that only in longer excerpts do we begin to get a glimpse of the quality of an author, and even then we cannot be certain that they are representative of the work as a whole.[100]

Jan Stronk has been particularly diligent in trying to demonstrate how later writers utilized Ctesias to their own ends, sometimes freely adapting and even altering the original meaning of the text. He notes that, with the exception of some twenty-nine lines written on papyrus (*Papyrus Oxyrhynchus* 2330; see below), we have next to nothing of authentic Ctesias and that everything we classify as Ctesian is, in fact, an adaptation of his work, filtered through the needs and personal tastes of his transmitters. Taking the four main transmitters of the *Persica*, Nicolas of Damascus, Diodorus Siculus, Plutarch, and Photius, Stronk has assessed the use made of Ctesias by each in order to gain a better understanding of how Ctesias' work functioned.[101]

Nicolas of Damascus

Nicolas' *Universal History* was an enormous 144 books long and covered the period from deep antiquity to the reign of Herod the Great (74–4 BCE), of whom he was a friend and confidant. It is best known today as a source for Josephus' *Jewish Antiquities*.[102] Books 1–7 dealt with the civilizations of the ancient Near East, the histories of which seem to have been placed alongside Old Testament writings

98 Lenfant 2004 and 2007a. For a reassessment of the fragments appertaining to events removed from court scandals see Stevenson 1997.

99 See especially Lenfant 1999.

100 Brunt 1980, 494.

101 Stronk 2007, 29–37. The following observations are based, by and large, on Stronk's key points. The authors are grateful to him for so generously sharing his thoughts.

102 For a useful introduction to Nicolas' works see Bellemore 1984, xv–xvii. See also the illuminating discussion on Nicolas' background and scholarship by Yarrow 2006, 66–76.

as a parallel. Stronk's assessment of Nicolas is that he chose the more dramatic and visual aspects of Ctesias for his work.[103] Most important for our understanding of Nicolas' use of the *Persica* is his version of the letter Stryangaeus wrote to Zarinaea (part of the so-called *Median Romance*), now preserved as Fragment 8c*.[104] It is Nicolas' version of the only surviving text of genuine Ctesias – the twenty-nine lines of *Papyrus Oxyrhynchus* 2330 (Fragment 8b).[105] But when we compare the original papyrus fragment with that of Nicolas' version of the text we see notable differences. *Papyrus Oxyrhynchus* 2330, Stryangaeus' eloquent suicide note, dwells on the nature of Love and the impact Eros has had on Stryangaeus himself:

> Stryangaeus to Zarinaea,
>
> I saved you and you were saved by me, and because of you I am done for and have killed myself – because you were unwilling to gratify me. I did not choose these trials and this love myself, rather Love destroyed me. This god is common to all men including you.
>
> And so when he {Love} comes propitiously to someone, he gives them very many pleasures and does them very many benefits besides; but when he is angry and comes like he does to me now, he causes countless evils and in the end completely ruins and utterly destroys them. I bear witness to this by my death. For I do not curse you at all but pray to you the most just prayer of all: if you treated me justly, . . .
>
> (Fragment 8b)

Nicolas' version says nothing of the nature of Love. His condensed version of the letter reads simply:

> Stryangaeus says the following to Zarinaea: I saved you and was responsible for all the good things you now enjoy. But you killed me and have deprived me of everything. So if you have acted justly, may you enjoy all these benefits and be happy. But if unjustly, may you experience the same suffering as me: for you advised me to be like this.
>
> (Fragment 8c*)

103 In this Stronk 2007 is following the work of Toher 1989.
104 Lenfant 2000.
105 See Bigwood 1986.

While in the Ctesian version Stryangaeus absolves both himself and Zarinaea of blame for their thwarted affair and his suicide (he lays the fault squarely on the shoulders of the personified Love), Nicolas of Damascus' Stryangaeus blames Zarinaea's indifference for his untimely death. Despite the common flow of argument and even parallels found within the two texts, Nicolas' version removes all the literary conceits (such as the personification of Love) from the narrative and comes out the poorer of the two, as far as literary construction goes (see further below). If Nicolas was content to alter one section of the *Persica* in such an elementary way, there is no reason to suppose that the rest of Ctesias' work was not misrepresented in a like manner throughout the *History*.

Diodorus Siculus

Written in the mid first century BCE, only fifteen of the forty books of Diodorus' *Library* (*Bibliotheca*) survive (Books 1–5; 11–20), although elements of the other books are preserved in fragmentary form. Diodorus' work encompasses the history of mankind from its mythological origins to 60 BCE, although he tends to concentrate on Greece and his homeland of Sicily until the events of the First Punic War when he begins to focus more on Roman history. The first six books cover the geography and ethnography of the world as well as the history of civilization up to the time of the Trojan War. Within these six books, 1–3 concentrate on the history of the East and 4–6 on that of the West.[106]

The most notable element of Diodorus' style of history is his interest in exploring the moral nature of humankind; the *Library* is therefore a moral treatise with an emphasis on the civilizing power of individual historical figures. Diodorus' own belief in Stoic universalism, as well as the influence of Hellenistic energetism, become evident throughout the history.[107] Commendable deeds performed by exemplary individuals are the hallmark of the *Library*.

Diodorus certainly used the sections from Ctesias' *Persica*, which dealt with Assyrian and Median history, but he merged them with other sources, especially the writings of Cleitarchus, the (firsthand) historian of Alexander the Great, and the historian Dinon of Colophon (Cleitarchus' father), himself the author of a *Persica* and an adaptor of Ctesias' material (see below).[108] Diodorus' account of Semiramis'

106 As a good introduction see Green 2006.
107 Sacks 1990.
108 For an overview of the sources for the *Library* see Stevenson 1997, 29–34.

Indian War (Fragment 1b §2.18–19), for example, is based on Alexander's real-life campaign in India as recounted by Cleitarchus, and so cannot be taken solely from Ctesias, although it is possible that Cleitarchus reworked the Alexander narrative in the manner of Ctesias' work (and it is possible, even probable, that Ctesias had written extensively on an Indian war of Semiramis).[109]

In a recent study by Sabine Compoli, it has been suggested that Diodorus' picture of Semiramis cannot safely be considered a mere summary of Ctesias' portrait of the queen.[110] She argues that the seven references to Ctesias in Diodorus (aside from the basic facts of Semiramis' life and reign) concern only reports of buildings and measurements. Compoli argues that Diodorus used Ctesias freely while carefully ploughing the *Persica* for materials that would suit his didactic take on history. In Diodorus' mind, a successful ruler has to be a good character, so that all of his characters, Semiramis included, are exemplary individuals. Ctesias' Semiramis, however, may have been less idealized as a paragon of monarchy.

Whatever the case with Semiramis, it is unlikely that Diodorus Siculus gives us a trustworthy overall adaptation of Ctesias' Assyrian and Median history. Undoubtedly, if we pause and examine Diodorus' version of the Zarinaea story, then we find that he has edited out all of the romanticism that Ctesias placed at the heart of the episode, which even Nicolas of Damascus managed to preserve, albeit in an attenuated form. In Diodorus the bare bones read:

> At that time a woman called Zarinaea ruled the Saces who was devoted to warfare and her bravery and actions made her truly outstanding amongst Sacian women. And so in general this tribe has women who are brave and share in the dangers of war along with the men, but this woman is said to have been the most extraordinarily beautiful of all and admirable in terms of her projects and the detail of whatever she undertook. She defeated those of the neighbouring barbarians who, spurred on by boldness, were trying to enslave the tribe of the Saces and she civilized a large part of her territory, founded several cities and in general made the life of her tribespeople happier. Because of this after her death the natives, giving thanks for her good deeds and in

109 See Gardiner-Garden 1987, 8–9. See further discussion in Stronk 2007, 32–33. See also Bigwood 1980.

110 Compoli 2002; cf. Lenfant 2004, 22–51.

> memory of her virtue, built a tomb which greatly surpassed any in the country . . . and paid her honours worthy of a hero and all the other honours they bestowed on her were more magnificent than any of those granted to her ancestors.
>
> (Fragment 5 §34.3–5)

In keeping with the high moral tone of his world history, Diodorus transforms Zarinaea from a romantic and tragic heroine to a valiant superwoman of national repute. There is no mention of Stryangaeus. All in all then, it must be conceded that Diodorus is not an accurate reflection of Ctesias.

Plutarch

As we noted earlier, Plutarch's reputation as an author of a particular type of history has recently been reassessed in a more positive light, but does this rehabilitation make him a reliable source for Ctesias? Born in Chaeronea around 50 CE, Plutarch travelled extensively, collecting materials for his works and lecturing in some of the ancient world's most important cultural centres, including Athens, Alexandria, and Rome. As a Platonist and a teacher of philosophy he wrote many treatises on themes of popular morality, and the same moralizing quality is to be found, as we have seen, in his biographical studies of the great men of antiquity. As Plutarch declared, the *Parallel Lives* were written with one aim:

> It is not Histories that I am writing, but Lives (*bioi*); [for] in the most glorious deeds virtue and vice is not always apparent and a slight thing like a phrase or a quip often makes for a better revelation of character than battles where thousands die, or the greatest fortifications, or sieges of cities. So, just as artists get their likenesses in their portraits from the face and expressions in the eyes, where the character really shows itself, but make little use of the rest of the body, you must allow me to devote myself to the signs of the soul within men, and by this means portray their lives, leaving others to describe their great battles.
>
> (Plutarch, *Alexander* 1.2–3)

His mission to use history to teach moral lessons compelled Plutarch to simplify historical facts and narrative complexities and he willingly manipulated history to support the ethical exempla he

desired to highlight. In his *Life of Cimon* he elucidates his thoughts clearly:

> Since it is difficult, perhaps impossible, to show a man's life as pure or blameless, we should fill out the truth to give a likeness where the good points are found, but regard the errors and follies with which emotion or politics sullies a career as deficiencies in some virtue rather than displays of ruthlessness, and therefore not to make any concerted effort to bring attention to them in the record. Our attitude should be one of shameful modesty on behalf of human nature which never produces unmixed or undisputed excellence of character.
>
> (Plutarch, *Cimon* 2.4–5)

It is obvious that Plutarch was extremely well read (Russell refers to his 'vast and catholic reading')[111] and that his travels enabled him to consult sources in public and private library collections, certainly in Athens, and perhaps in other parts of the Roman Empire too. He drew upon several sources to compose each of his *Lives*, although Christopher Pelling has suggested that Plutarch's most probable method of research was to read and then base his text on one major historical work, which he regarded as a definitive source, and to add to it other historians' interpretations by drawing from memory any other information he deemed important or necessary.[112] His interaction with literature was remarkable and it has been estimated that in the complete output of work he used around 7,000 quotations drawn from other authors whom he must have read firsthand.[113]

Interestingly, the *Parallel Lives* make very little use of Herodotus as a prime source; this might lead one to suspect that Plutarch had only a sketchy knowledge of the *Histories*. This is not true. Plutarch knew Herodotus' work well, as is testified by his treatise *On the Malice of Herodotus*, a vicious attack on the Herodotean *raison d'être*.[114] Herodotus is condemned by Plutarch for allowing his pro-Persian sympathies to rise to the surface of the *Histories* too frequently, so much so that the 'Father of History' is re-labelled a 'barbarian-lover' (*philobarbos*), one who favours foreign accounts of past deeds over Greek

111 Russell 1972, 62.
112 Pelling 1998 and 2002.
113 See Stronk, forthcoming. See also Russell 1972, 46–47.
114 Plutarch, *Moralia*, 854 E–874 C.

ones (by this, of course, Plutarch refers to Herodotus' Persian, Egyptian, and, perhaps to a lesser extent, Phoenician sources). He notes that Herodotus deliberately tricks his readers into accepting untrustworthy alien accounts of Greek history, thereby diminishing the deeds of great men and of city-states.[115] This is very revealing. Plutarch shows himself to be not only a rigid moralist but an overt pro-Hellenist in his choice of subject matter and engagement with the past. In this respect he rides the crest of the wave of the 'Second Sophistic' movement (the renaissance of Greek learning in the Roman Empire). In particular it was the concept of 'Greek freedom' that aroused Plutarch's passions and often coloured his engagement with history.[116]

Given the pro-Hellenic feelings, which elicited so much vitriol in his condemnation of Herodotus, what then can we make of Plutarch's attitude to Ctesias? We have already seen that Plutarch is not consistent in his opinion of Ctesias, and he certainly utilized Ctesias closely for his *Life of Artaxerxes* and possibly to pad out the background material he needed about life at the Persian court for some of his other *Lives*, notably *Alcibiades*, *Lysander*, and, of course, *Alexander*. He claims to have thought Ctesias a reliable source for Persian court affairs because as a doctor Ctesias spent time with Artaxerxes II, his mother, and his children (Testimonium 11d), but his reliance on non-Greek sources (see below) must have made Ctesias suspect in Plutarch's eyes. Furthermore, Plutarch judges him to be a self-promoting liar (Testimonium 7b).

The *Life of Artaxerxes*, while standing apart from the other *Parallel Lives* in its unique focus on a barbarian ruler (it was possibly written as a very separate exercise from the *Lives*), is nonetheless typically Plutarchian in its cavalier attitude towards chronology and its focus on morality. Artaxerxes himself is portrayed on the one hand as an envious tyrant, but as a thoughtful ruler on the other; likewise Parysatis oscillates between love of honour and devotion for her younger son Cyrus and passionate hatred for his enemies. Plutarch also regards certain Persian customs as morally corrupt: he criticises the royal custom of father-daughter marriage as the most hateful form of incest, and shows discomfort with his (misguided) observation that the Persian monarch ruled as a god on earth (Plutarch, *Artaxerxes* 23.3). Moreover Plutarch's Hellenocentric tendency becomes apparent in his criticism of the so-called 'King's Peace' – the treaty made

115 Plutarch, *Moralia*, 874 B–C.
116 Pelling 1998, 18–19, 243–247.

between Greece and Artaxerxes – which he interprets as a betrayal and mockery of Greek values (Plutarch, *Artaxerxes* 23.1).[117]

It is clear that Plutarch used Ctesias' *Persica* freely, but was willing to criticise the work where it departed from his own agenda. It is likely that he plundered the *Persica* for information about Persian life, which he found useful, but he could not help but criticise elements of Persian royal society he found distasteful or un-Hellenic.

Photius

Dating from the ninth century CE, the *Library* (*Bibliotheca*) of the Byzantine Patriarch Photius is perhaps our most important source for Ctesias' *Persica*. The *Library* is a collection of notes on about 280 works written by a host of authors dating from the fifth century BCE to Photius' own time, although the majority of the books summarized belong to the Hellenistic and Roman Imperial eras. At least half of the works in the *Library* did not survive antiquity, Ctesias' *Persica* amongst them (it is classified in the *Library* as codex 72).

Photius has been called the world's first book reviewer, an appropriate appellation given his keenness not only to provide a personal comment on the nature of the books he examines, but also to provide a résumé of their content.[118] It is generally assumed that the *Library* was composed hurriedly and that Photius wrote his summaries and comments in the haphazard order in which his memory recalled the books he had read. There is a certain amount of repetition (there are sixteen occasions wherein a book already reviewed is revisited a second time), and a surprising lack of uniformity: some reviews are very short, others are very long.

Photius shows little interest in reviewing poetry, and has little interest in philosophy and science either, but he clearly enjoyed reading history, and had a particular penchant for authors who dealt with the Orient: Procopius' account of the Roman wars against Persia (codex 63), Theophanes' account of Justinian's war against the Persian Chosroes (codex 64), Philostratus' *Life of Apollonius of Tyana* (codex 241), Iamblichus' extraordinary novel *History of Babylon* (codex 94), and of course Ctesias' *Persica*.

As Stronk has suggested, although we cannot suspect Photius of deliberately misusing Ctesias in order to fulfil a hidden agenda (like

117 Stronk 2007, 34–35. For an overview of the sources for the *Life of Artaxerxes* see Stevenson 1997, 24–29.

118 Saintsbury 1900, Vol. I, 184; Wilson 1994, 1–2. See also Bigwood 1989.

Nicolas of Damascus, Diodorus, and Plutarch), using the Photian *epitome* of the *Persica* is problematic.[119] Most importantly, Photius' review of Ctesias' great work removes much of Ctesias' literary style – a facet of the *Persica* that the Byzantine Bishop greatly enjoyed (Testimonium 13; see further below) – and with it much of the spirit of the original work. Photius was also keen to illuminate the differences between Herodotus and Ctesias (and to a lesser extent Xenophon) and this inevitably affected his selection of episodes from Books 7–13 of the *Persica*.

Taking into account the *Library* as a whole, it becomes clear that Photius could be lax in giving a complete summary of a book. Procopius' work called the *History of the Wars of Justinian* (codex 63) is a case in point. Here Photius gives a full and thorough account of the work up to Book 2, Chapter 18, but fails to give *any* résumé of Books 3–8. Similarly, Appian's *Roman History* (codex 57) contains an incomplete summary of Book 1 and a very sketchy précis of the rest of the work; of the twenty books of Josephus' *Jewish Antiquities*, Photius opts to review only a few chapters from the final book and to tack on a few facts lifted from Josephus' *Autobiography* (codex 76).[120]

Nor is accuracy guaranteed: Photius' précis of Heliodorus' novel *The Ethiopian Story* (*Aethiopica*) is baffling and overcomplicates an already convoluted story (codex 73). All in all, as Nigel Wilson points out:

> When a serious deficiency is added to many minor slips, even a critic well-disposed to Photius must strike a note of caution: it would be dangerous to place implicit confidence in what Photius tells us of texts no longer extant.[121]

So while Photius is undoubtedly of value for preserving elements of Ctesias' work, we cannot guarantee that the long *epitome* gives a completely accurate representation of what the *Persica* contained. Therefore, as Stronk has emphasized, it would be wrong to pronounce on Ctesias' value as a historian based on an *epitome* whose value and authority cannot be ascertained with any accuracy.

119 Stronk 2007, 35–36.

120 Likewise the *epitome* of Arrian's *Anabasis of Alexander* is strangely imbalanced: Photius devotes much of his attention (two-fifths of the précis in fact) to Book 7, while other books are overlooked entirely and their important historical content (such as the siege of Tyre) ignored. See Stronk 2007, 35–37; Wilson 1994, 4–6.

121 Wilson 1994, 5.

It is important to recognize that our main sources for Ctesias do not necessarily give us a clear account of how the *Persica* was constructed or what it contained. We have to filter the *Persica* through layers of later works, each one preoccupied with its own agenda, to such an extent that the pure essence of the *Persica* is almost all but lost.

Nonetheless, despite the frustrations of working with a long-vanished text preserved only through the colourations and inaccuracies of other authors, we can say with confidence that the *Persica* was an impressive work, an enormous and entertaining read. It survived in the Greek-speaking world for over a thousand years and was utilized by other authors throughout its long history. Starting as early as Xenophon (Testimonium T15), it was still being read in the ninth century CE and may only have disappeared around the time of the fall of Constantinople in 1453 CE.

Does this bring us any closer to envisaging Ctesias as a particular type of author? Now that we have evaluated some of the pitfalls of approaching Ctesias through the (hidden) agendas of later epitomists and authors, let us consider the field of history-writing in which he sits most comfortably – the genre known as *Persica.*

V. *PERSICA*: GREEK AUTHORS LOOK EAST

Persica is the name given to a particular field of Greek history writing, which developed throughout the fifth and fourth centuries BCE: *Persica* are monographs written about the Persians and their Empire at the time when the Achaemenid dynasty was ruling the biggest land Empire the world had ever seen.[122] Ctesias' own *Persica* was composed at the midway point in the history of this popular genre. As such, it was informed by earlier writings on Persia, and had a profound effect on later *Persica*.

During the late Archaic period there had been an increasing interest amongst Greek scholars in writing treatises on the ethnography of Eastern societies and on the legendary genealogies of Greek gods and heroes, which were sometimes located in the Orient. Thus, for example, the Assyrian king known to the Greeks as Ninus, the

122 Of course the Greek fascination with Persia was reflected in literary genres other than *Persica* proper: Persia is frequently alluded to in legal orations, histories, drama, poetry, novels, and philosophy. See Stevenson 1997, 1–3 and Georges 1994. On Greek literary interaction with the Persian world, see Sancisi-Weerdenburg 2001.

founder of the city of Nineveh, was thought to be the direct descendant of the Greek superhero Heracles (Herodotus 1.7). But it was only after the Persian occupation of the Greek-speaking cities of Western Asia Minor in the 540s BCE that Persia itself became the focus of more intense study, with the Greeks trying to understand the nature of the (unwelcome) new superpower. A fragment of a work by an Ionian Greek named Xenophanes of Colophon (an early philosopher) gives us an indication of how the Greek world reacted to the Persian incursion into Greek-speaking lands; Fragment 18 recalls the content of a fireside chat:

> Such things should be said beside the fire in the wintertime when a man reclines, bloated with food, on a soft couch, sipping sweet wine and munching chick-peas; things like: 'Who are you, and where do you come from?' and 'how old are you?' 'What age were you when the Mede came?'[123]

The Persians exerted a remarkable hold over the Greek imagination and Greek literature overflows with references to all kinds of diverse Persian exotica: Persian-sounding (but fake) names, references to tribute, to *proskynesis* (obeisance), law, impalement, the King's Eye, good roads, eunuchs, gardens, drinking, and gold. Christopher Tuplin presents a useful composite picture of the Persians as seen in Greek literature:

> They . . . possess a large empire . . . whose only (other) physical, floral or faunal characteristics are extremes of heat and cold, mountains, citrus fruit, camels, horses, peacocks, cocks, (perhaps) lions for hunting, *paradeisoi* [gardens], road systems measured in *parasangs* and travelled by escorted ambassadors and official messengers . . . There is great wealth . . . Persians are liable to pride, hauteur, and inaccessibility . . . They enjoy a luxurious life-style (exemplified by clothing, textiles, food and drink, tableware, means of transport, fans and fly-whisks, furniture) in a positively organized, regimented fashion: but the queens are sexually virtuous and sometimes energetically warlike . . . Their policy is defined by a tyrannical ideology and systems of deferential behaviour

123 When Harpagus the Mede invaded Ionia in 546/5 BCE Xenophanes was forced to leave his homeland and travel abroad. This is probably the background context of the fragment.

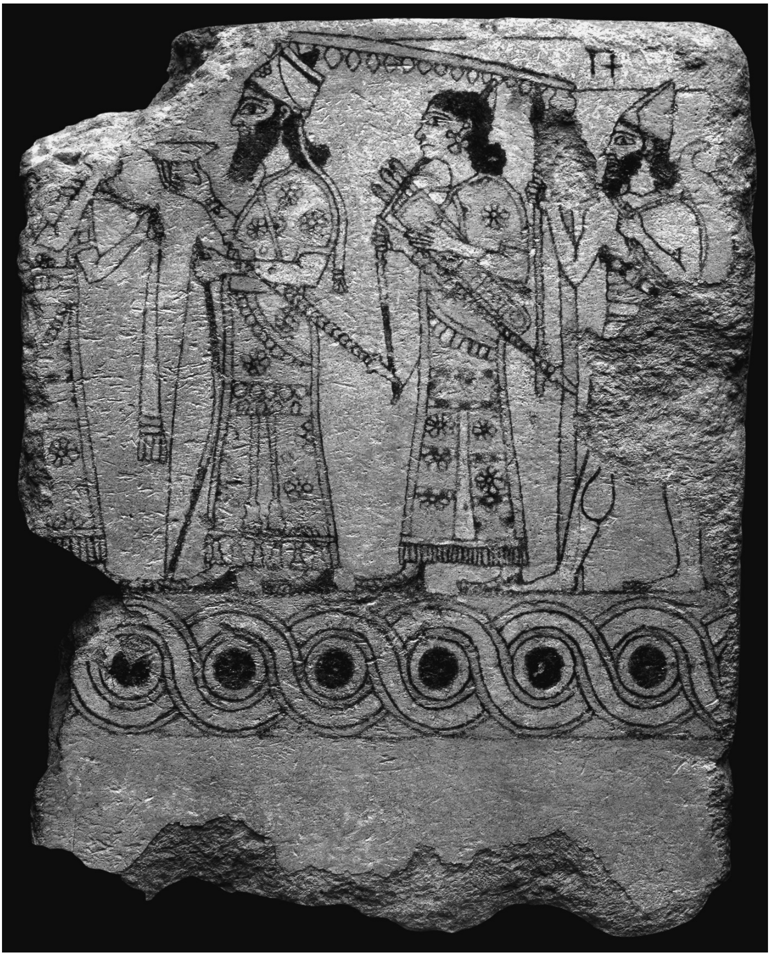


Figure 5 Wall painting of an Assyrian king and his court from Nimrud (*c*.883–859 BCE). The beautifully embroidered robes of the monarch and his courtiers, the curled hair and eye-make up are captured in Ctesias' depiction of Sardanapallus. Painted glazed wall plaque. Photograph © The Trustees of the British Museum.

> and hierarchical control which deny equality . . . [They] value mere power and are inimical to the principal of Law – except that there have been 'good' Persian kings to whom some of this does not apply. Eunuchs will be encountered; and impalement or crucifixion is employed as a punishment.[124]

EARLY *PERSICA*

The first author of a *Persica* proper was Dionysus of Miletus who seems to have attempted an outline of Persian history from the end of the reign of Cambyses II (522 BCE) to the end of the reign of Darius the Great (486 BCE). He also authored a text called *Events After Darius* that comprised five books detailing the reign of Xerxes and the period of the Persian Wars from 480–479 BCE.[125] The purpose of his works, argues Kuhrt, was specifically to commemorate the (surprise) Greek victory over the armies of Xerxes.[126] The same might apply to the *Persica* of Charon of Lampsacus who seems to have written a concise narrative (in only two books) of Persian history from its legendary origins to the time of Themistocles' meeting with Artaxerxes I.

Also working within the same genre was Hellanicus of Lesbos who was born around 490 BCE and who is reputed to have lived to the age of eighty-five. Throughout his long life he remained fascinated by ethnography and wrote several books on barbarian peoples (*Cypriaca*; *Lydiaca*; *Persica*; *Scythica*), as well as works on the diverse peoples of Greek-speaking lands (*Aeolica*; *Lesbiaca*; *Argolica*; *Boeotica*; *Thessalica*). These books contained the usual descriptions of manners, customs, historical events, and mythological genealogies, which had become the standard fare for 'historical' investigations. Of the sixteen surviving fragments of his *Persica* we can deduce that he was the first Greek author to deal with the complex history and legends of Assyria and Babylonia, and he also covered the rise of the Medes and Persians.[127] He collected stories about the semi-mythical king Sardanapallus (an amalgamation perhaps of the Assyrian monarchs Esarhaddon and Assurbanipal) and argued that there were in fact two kings named Sardanapallus: one a luxury-loving effeminate, the other a heroic warrior. Thus he manages to explain the two traditions about

124 Tuplin 1996, 164.

125 Drews 1973, 36; Lenfant 2007a, 201.

126 Kuhrt 2000, 57.

127 Fowler 2001 suggests that Hellanicus had nothing less than a 'comprehensive research programme' in mind when he composed his various works.

Sardanapallus that had already become popular in the Greek world by the late Archaic period. It is also clear that Hellanicus covered the events of early Achaemenid history, including the murder of Cambyses' successor and the accession of Darius the Great, the invasion of Greece by Xerxes (to the Battle of Salamis), as well as details of Persian life and customs. As a contemporary of Herodotus, it is possible that Hellanicus' *Persica* worked as a parallel (if more concise) redaction of the better-known *Histories*.[128]

HERODOTUS' *HISTORIES* VERSUS CTESIAS' *PERSICA*

It is acknowledged that Jacoby regarded Herodotus' *Histories* (written about 440 BCE) as one of the great pioneering works of history writing. He argued, therefore, that all historians who came after Herodotus must have modelled their works on his monumental work. This idea was reflected in the structure of the *FGrH* itself, since Jacoby passionately argued for a post-Herodotean date for most of the fragmentary historians he collected together.

Robert Fowler, however, presents a powerful counter argument, claiming a contemporary or pre-Herodotean date for many of those whom Jacoby places after him. Fowler suggests that we should see Herodotus' large contribution to 'history' in terms of his innovations within a genre that was alive before and during his writing, rather than seeking to prove his importance by pronouncing him 'the first' of the crop of prose history writers. Fowler sees Herodotus' unique contribution to history writing as his willingness to engage critically with his sources by weighing them up, one against the other, and making a judgement on their validity. It is this attitude which sets Herodotus apart from his contemporaries who were happy to report facts but rarely mentioned or criticized sources and, as far as extant material indicates, never openly considered them in front of the listener.[129]

With this argument, Fowler persuasively places Herodotus within a context of historical writing, surrounded by authors like the Lydian Xanthos (probably older), Hellanicus of Lesbos, Charon of Lampsachus, Dionysius of Miletus, Pherecydes of Athens (probably dated to 470), Antiochus of Syracuse (*c.*424/3), and Simonides of Cios amongst others.[130] Undeniable also is the presence of older historical

128 See Drews 1973, 23–24; Lenfant 2007a, 202.
129 Fowler 1996, 78.
130 Fowler 1996, 62–69.

and scientific predecessors such as Hecataeus of Miletus (who himself may have been heavily influenced by the older natural philosophers, particularly the Milesians Thales, Anaximander and Anaximines, with whom Herodotus might have also been familiar). The dearth of evidence is such that we must heed Fowler's caution against dogma of any sort – there is simply not enough evidence (let alone clearly datable evidence) to allow us a full understanding of Herodotus' models.

Herodotus' work embraced a range of genres whose styles he used at different points in the work for different purposes. Ancient commentators judged Herodotus' style as *poikilē*, 'varied', 'multi-stranded', and 'embroidered' (here in the sense, perhaps, of 'fabricated'). At one point he might be keen to highlight the scientific background of his sources, which sets him apart from his contemporaries (in, say, his discussion of the river Nile), while at another point he constructs a formal *agōn* to show his debt to the intellectual climate of Athens (in the so-called 'Constitutional Debate' at 3.80–83). In tales of 'Historical Fiction', to borrow Boedeker's term, such as the story of Harpagus and the boy Cyrus (1.19.7), Herodotus leaves aside the tools of critical enquiry and proceeds on a narrative uninterrupted by mention or evaluation of sources.[131] Such stories serve a different purpose and consequently display a different style of 'history' writing.[132]

It is therefore possible to fit Herodotus' *Histories* comfortably into the genre of *Persica* since the work undoubtedly owes much to the ethnographic and narrative framework of earlier *Persica*. However, Herodotus' vision is much bigger and more encompassing than the earlier investigations and surpasses any Archaic attempts at formulating an understanding of world history. For his Near Eastern sections it is clear that he drew on clichéd events from Assyrian history, which were already common currency in the Greek-speaking world, although there is some debate about the nature of his extensive Babylonian excursus. It is unlikely that Herodotus visited Persian-occupied Babylon, and his reports of Babylonian life – eating, drinking, recreational habits, sexual practices, religious observances, and so forth – were written with the deliberate aim of 'Othering' Eastern societies. In brief, in the period following the Persian Wars there was a deliberate literary practice whereby authors of various literary genres (dramatic, poetic, historical) demonstrated, usually for derogatory

131 Boedeker 2000. For Herodotus and Achaemenid historiography, see Balcer 1987.

132 Fowler 1996, 76.

purposes, how non-Greek cultures diverged from accepted Greek norms. This perhaps is one of Herodotus' main legacies in the composition of later Classical-period *Persica*, and if we choose to follow Sancisi-Weerdenburg's argument, then it is only with Ctesias that we find the first stirrings of the outright negative tones connected to Orientalism (see further below).

Herodotus does, however, provide accurate details for facets of Persian life: he notes the satrapal and tribute systems employed throughout the Empire (3.89), the communications and road system (5.52), and details of the Persian court and its courtiers (8.89). He notes the picturesque minutiae of Persian life: the 'fact' that market places are unknown in Persia (1.153), and that Persians have brittle skulls (3.12). While he is essentially pro-Greek, Herodotus also finds much to admire in Persian culture (1.131–138) and occasionally even flatters his Persian protagonists (4.83; 7.10, 51); it is for these reasons that Plutarch labelled him *philobarbaros*.

Herodotus' vision and construction of Persia was so encompassing that it took several decades before an author was prepared to tackle a Persian history again; the author was Ctesias and it is important to stress that there is no evidence for any other author attempting a Persian history in between Herodotus and Ctesias. Ctesias' *Persica* actually shares many features with the *Histories*: both works focus on the Median origins of the Achaemenids, on the succession of monarchs from Cyrus the Great onwards, and on the series of wars between Persia and Greece. As Lenfant has noted, both Herodotus and Ctesias, 'had descriptive, ethnographical notations [and] neither rejected *muthoi* (mythic stories), paradoxical phenomena or entertaining court tales'.[133] However, Lenfant also notes that Ctesias shares only a third of his subject matter with Herodotus and that the *Persica* had a very different tone from the *Histories*, inspired without a doubt by Ctesias' own experiences at the Persian court.[134]

Photius' assertion that Ctesias deliberately aimed to discredit Herodotus (Testimonium 8) is perhaps reflected in the overall composition of the *Persica*, which is markedly different from that of the *Histories*.[135] Herodotus' nine books are a detailed ethnographic study of the peoples, societies, and cultures of the Persian Empire.

133 Lenfant 2007a, 204. See further Lenfant 2004, XXVIII–XXXII.

134 Lenfant 2004.

135 On Ctesias' construction of Herodotus as a 'fable-monger' (*logopoios*) see Marincola 1997, 227. Later historians followed Ctesias' model in criticising other historians (by name) in their prefaces. See Marincola 1997, 228.

In particular he focuses on subject nations like Lydia (Book 1) and Egypt (Book 2) and there is even a long discourse on the nomadic Scythians (Book 4). However, the main theme of the work – the origins and development of the wars of the Greeks and the Persians – pulsates throughout the narrative and is never forgotten. Moreover, Herodotus ends his history with Xerxes' disastrous Greek expedition, even though the author lived on for another fifty-odd years and could have developed the story further. Almost half of the text of the *Histories* deals with the Greco-Persian conflict.[136]

Ctesias had a very different agenda. Drews thinks of him purposely reacting against Herodotus to convince his audience that what they read in the *Histories* was wrong or irrelevant (and there may be some truth in this).[137] Reinhold Bichler goes much further. He suggests that Ctesias was playing some kind of intellectual game with his readers and that his opposition to Herodotus was 'like a kind of persiflage and . . . not a serious attempt to correct Herodotus'.[138] We must not, Bichler argues, see Ctesias only as a brave historian (since he drew material from the sources available to him as an eyewitness) and an honest man (all be it a naïve writer of history). Ctesias was more than that. For Bichler, Ctesias was the creator of a literary game in which he teased his readers by deliberately seeking for literary sensations and overturning their Herodotean expectations. He created nothing less than genre-parody.

While it is true that Ctesias was intentionally entertaining, and that he wrote for a contemporary audience (and did not expect to be read half a millennium later), it is difficult to think that he aimed only at creating a parody around the figure of the revered Herodotus. The *Persica* is more than a literary joust. In fact, Ctesias simply envisaged his interaction with the Persian world differently from Herodotus. Sitting at the heart of the Empire, at the court of the Great King, Ctesias marginalizes the Greco-Persian Wars (Drews' 'Great Event') and opts instead to explore the history of the East from the Assyrians of the eighth century BCE to the century following the Persian Wars. In other words he is the first Greek author to attempt to look at Persian history from the *inside*, a place where the 'Great Event' of Greek history, as narrated by Herodotus, was only one of many wars experienced by the Achaemenid kings, their nobles, and their subjects (and an event, moreover, which the Persians had

136 For a focused discussion with good insights, see Tuplin 2007.
137 Drews 1973, 105–106.
138 Bichler 2004, 506.

emerged from relatively unscathed). Ctesias' omissions and confusions in the outline of the events of the marginalized Greco-Persian Wars can be explained perhaps by the idea that his internal sources did not chronicle the events in detail (or at all; see below). Combined with his own indifference in augmenting the orthodox and established Greek narrative of events provided by Herodotus, it is no wonder that the *Persica* differs so radically from the *Histories*.

The idea that Ctesias reproduces Persian traditions and used Persian sources for his work is becoming more popular in scholarship. While this might not necessarily improve the 'quality' of Ctesias' historical research when compared to Herodotus, it does give us an insight, perhaps, into how the Persians themselves viewed their past.[139] We shall return to the question of how Ctesias approaches history later.

PERSICA POST CTESIAS

Ctesias exerted a huge influence on later authors of *Persica*, and two fourth-century writers in particular were indebted to him: Dinon of Colophon and Heracleides of Cumae, both of whom composed *Persica* right at the end of the Achaemenid Empire and expanded Ctesias' chronological framework by at least five decades.

Writing in the 330s, Dinon (the father of the Alexander-historian Cleitarchus) wrote a history of Assyria and Persia from the reign of Semiramis down to the reconquest of Egypt by Artaxerxes III in 343/2 BCE. His *Persica* is preserved in thirteen fragments and owes a considerable debt to Ctesias, but he does not adhere to Ctesias slavishly (and was no more willing to follow Ctesias blindly than Ctesias was to follow Herodotus).[140] Plutarch used Dinon in conjunction with Ctesias in his composition of the *Life of Artaxerxes*. Dinon appears to have lived and worked in Asia Minor and was in a good position to enquire about the nature of the Persian Empire; indeed it has been suggested that he had direct sources from the Persian court, possibly via a member of the household of Tiribazus, the Satrap of Sardis.[141]

Despite the negative slurs flung at him for writing 'petite histoire' in the style of Ctesias, Dinon has fared better that his predecessor in scholarly estimation. So much so, indeed, that Jacoby was prepared

139 Kuhrt 2000, 60; Stronk 2007. See further below, pp. 58–68.

140 Lenfant 2004, 275, n. 632. See also Lenfant 2009.

141 Stevenson 1997, 13.

to call Dinon's history 'ein Quellenwerk'.[142] The fragments of Dinon, many found in the second century CE *Banquet of the Sophists* (*Deipnosophistai*) by Athenaeus, suggests that he did not intend to write a conventional history of Persia, which focused on wars and successions, but rather an investigation into court society and princely display; he was also interested, it would appear, in Persian religion. Rosemary Stevenson suggests that Dinon went so far as to invent episodes of Persian history 'not with the intention of misleading or simply amusing, but rather of filling in gaps in his sources, which might be felt by his readers'. She argues that ultimately Dinon emerges as 'a reasonably serious and careful historian'.[143]

Very little is known of Heracleides or of his five-book *Persica*, save that it survives in eight fragments, three of which are preserved verbatim in Athenaeus. There is no evidence that Heracleides was interested in Assyrian or Median history and he possibly concentrated his work on Persian history alone. Of the surviving fragments, two allude to somewhat melodramatic events at court: Themistocles' meeting with Xerxes and Artaxerxes II's incestuous marriages to his daughters. The long fragments preserved in Athenaeus, however, provide detailed accounts of court life: palaces, royal feasts, concubinage, bodyguards, and palace security. Comparison with Achaemenid sources, such as the Persepolis Fortification Texts, suggests that Heracleides' information was accurate although, as Lenfant has observed:

> the most unusual feature seems to be the way in which he tried to explain the logic of the system he described, to show the king's dinner was an intelligent and rigorous institution, and that the huge quantity of various meats was not employed to indulge in luxury (as the Greeks might have caricatured it), but was rather a judicious way to remunerate a part of the royal staff.[144]

All in all then, it would appear that Dinon recalls the court propaganda of Artaxerxes II and shows his personal connection to

142 Jacoby 1923, 622. For Dinon and 'petite histoire' see Drews 1973, 117: 'Dinon corrected Ctesias just as often as Ctesias corrected Herodotus, but since Ctesias' subject matter was inconsequential, Dinon's 'corrections' seem less grotesque.'

143 Stevenson 1987, 35.

144 Lenfant 2007a, 207 and, more generally, Lenfant 2009. See also Sancisi-Weerdenburg 1995.

the household of Tiribazus, while Heracleides elaborates on details of court etiquette. Both authors are completely reliant on Ctesias as their ultimate source.

THE IMPORTANCE OF *PERSICA*

Stevenson suggests that the post-Herodotean authors of *Persica* can be trusted to provide considerable detail about Persian life (especially at court), which is not to be found in any other source.[145] We need to balance this happy fact with a less useful aspect of standard *Persica*: that they tend to ignore (or at best underplay) military history. This is certainly true of the conflict between Greeks and Persians, which appears in either sketchy outline or mangled chronological narrative.

Yet *Persica* served an important function in the Greek world, for *Persica* fulfilled the Greeks' need to understand the alien culture, which they simultaneously most feared, derided, and desired.[146] *Persica* helped to mould Classical Greek self-identity.[147] It is interesting to note that, from the late Archaic period to the age of Alexander the Great, each successive generation of Greeks had its own *Persica* that served to reconfirm, as needed, national identity against the ever-changing yet ever-present external Persian threat. It is no coincidence that the desire to understand their powerful neighbours was expressed by the Greeks of Asia Minor, and the authors of all known *Persica*, Herodotus amongst them, were born (and often resided) in cities under the intermittent domination of the Achaemenids.

VI. CTESIAS AND HIS SOURCES

It is probable that during his years at the Persian court Ctesias learned to understand and then speak Persian with some fluency.[148] This idea is advanced by Plutarch (Fragment 23 §6), who suggests that Ctesias acted as a translator between the Great King and the Greeks. We know that Themistocles allegedly only took a year to learn Persian well enough to converse in it without an interpreter (Plutarch, *Life of Themistocles* 27), and so it is feasible that in his seventeen-year

145 Stevenson 1997, 159.
146 See Miller 1997 for issues of Greek receptivity in regards to Achaemenid culture.
147 The theme propounded by Hall 1989.
148 Contra Brosius, forthcoming, 61.

residency at Court, Ctesias was able to understand Persian.[149] He claims to have received information from Queen Parysatis herself – there is no suggestion of an interpreter – and it is hardly feasible to imagine that the Queen Mother spoke much, if any, Greek. It evidently would not be fitting for an Achaemenid princess to speak such a barbaric language either: and so, when Alexander the Great married his two royal Persian brides, he had to send them off to Susa with tutors in order that they learn the Greek tongue (Diodorus Siculus 17.67.1).

Persian words evidently found their way into the *Persica*, too. The Persian vocabulary found in Photius' *epitome* is no doubt lifted directly from Ctesias' text and thus affords us a rare insight into the use of language in the original work. Persian words would have presumably played a role in creating an air of exoticism for Ctesias' Greek readers but were used only sparingly, if Photius' summary is at all representative. They tend to denote status positions not reflected in Greek society: *pisagas* (a leper §41) and *azabarites* (Head of the Royal Bodyguard §46), or regal *realia*, such as the *kriokranoi* (balcony or roof-space) of the royal palace (§2) or the royal *citaris* (§47), perhaps a type of crown.

But what exactly was the language Ctesias spoke at court? Old Persian, the language of the royal inscriptions of the Achaemenid kings, was only one of the many languages of the Empire (and may never have been a spoken language at all, but one utilized solely for the written word). Akkadian, Elamite, and Imperial Aramaic, to name but some of the languages of this polyglottal Empire, were possibly spoken and written at court too.[150] Of course there may have been a hierarchy of Achaemenid court languages: a spoken form of Old Persian – derived from a central Iranian dialect perhaps – was possibly the preferred language of the King and his courtiers, with Elamite the language of the administration and Aramaic the *lingua franca* of the scribes. We know that Parysatis was the daughter of a Babylonian concubine (Fragment 15 §7), so it is likely that she could speak 'standard' Babylonian too. This multi-lingual system may have worked on a par with, say, the Russian court in the early decades of the twentieth century. Here we find that French was the official language of the Tsar's court, although many court offices were

149 While he might have functioned with the aid of an interpreter, as a court doctor Ctesias would find it expedient to speak the local language to converse one-to-one with his patients.

150 On the languages of the Empire, see Cook 1983, 12–13; Briant 2002, 507–511. On Greek attitudes towards foreign languages, see Vignolo Munson 2005.

based on German models, as transliterated by the Russians, and carried such titles as *ober-tsere-moniimeister* (Grand Master of Ceremonies). Russian was used for all governmental purposes, but was not regarded as a language fit for courtiers. English was the preferred language of communication for the Tsar and his immediate family, although German was also a language utilized by the Tsarina and her blood-kin.[151]

The importance of the spoken word cannot be overestimated in ancient Near Eastern societies for the transference of information: legends, stories, news, and gossip. The Middle East still lays great emphasis on oral tradition where people use both informal, uncontrolled oral traditions (for news and gossip), and formal controlled traditions (used for storytelling – especially for 'classics' taken from religious and cultural traditions – as well as riddles and proverbs). Ctesias' claim that he heard details of royal history from Parysatis herself is therefore very exciting (Testimonium 8b). If this is indeed the case, and there is no cause to automatically doubt it, then the information is of tremendous importance, although Parysatis' evidence, however it was filtered into the *Persica*, can only count as part of an uncontrolled oral tradition, consisting of personal evidence, her own interpretation of events, hearsay, and gossip. After all, Parysatis' recollections were unlikely to be documented in any official source. Nonetheless, Ctesias' stories of court events (including the intrigues) no doubt came from this kind of source.

Photius stresses that Ctesias 'made sure that he personally heard accounts from Persians themselves and that this is how he wrote his history' (Testimonium 8) and it is likely that Ctesias gathered much information about Persian life, customs, and history simply by observing and listening. As a servant of the Great King, albeit a privileged one, he was no doubt frequently in the sphere of the royal family and may unobtrusively have picked up many incidental details as he went about his daily business. At other times he questioned individuals, and it is possible that Ctesias used the accounts of many different classes of people in his composition of the *Persica*. Characteristically, Drews pictures Ctesias sourcing his information from only the lowliest echelons of the court: 'items from kitchen gossip in which Ctesias, his fellow physicians, the cooks, the translators, and the functionaries of the royal court whiled away their leisure time.' He suggests that eunuchs offered him misremembered or misguided accounts of earlier reigns, tall tales of the time 'when one

151 King 2006.

of their predecessors, Artoxares, pasted a beard and moustache on his face and pretended to be a king'.[152]

However, Ctesias' knowledge of the political manoeuvrings inside the royal family exceeds mere kitchen tittle-tattle. His account of the troubles of the family of Megabyzus and Zopyrus suggests that he came in contact with the few survivors of that family, or at least with household staff intimately connected to their masters (Fragment 13 §26; Fragment 14 §40). Ctesias' access to the great and the good of Persian court society, facilitated through his role of physician to the royal family and his probable ability to understand (some) Persian, very likely gave him access to all sorts of information – albeit of the uncontrolled oral variety. For today's reader, this makes his oral sources for court history provocative and certainly unique. As Jan Stronk points out, 'Ctesias' work is [both] revealing and at the same time down to earth [and] even if Ctesias were telling the truth all the time we would not be able to prove (or disprove!) it.'[153]

John Marincola has noted that ancient historians writing under autocratic regimes often emphasize their privileged access to information, asserting that they are close to the source of power itself. Ctesias, Marincola ascertains, is the earliest historian to make this claim, and argues that:

> We ought not to doubt that this form of validation, in which the author portrayed himself as close to those in power, was important for establishing the authority of the [later] historians of Alexander and his successors . . . It may explain why the patronage of a king was desirable for a historian, since he would have scant chance to know secret transactions and the councils that had led to the deeds.[154]

It is clear that Ctesias used more than the spoken word (albeit the words of princes) to create his work. Ctesias also claims to have used royal archives as a source for the *Persica*: 'it was from the royal parchments in which the Persians kept their ancient deeds laid out according to a law that he inquired closely into each and every detail' (Testimonium 3; see also Fragment 1b §22.5). He cites them variously as 'royal parchments' (*basilikai diphtherai*) and 'royal archives' (*basilikai graphai*). What evidence is there for these official records? Jacoby

152 Drews 1973, 107. On gossip and Near Eastern history, see Lasine 2001, 93–125, and for references to Ctesias and gossip, see 118–121.

153 Stronk 2007, 114.

154 Marincola 1997, 87, 89.

insisted that such documents never existed. John Sharwood Smith suggests that Ctesias did 'not seem to have had access to Persian sources of any value'. In other words Ctesias is either lying about his sources or, if they did exist, they were good for nothing.[155] If archives did exist, insists Briant, then they were simple administrative documents but not a written record of the deeds and accomplishments of kings, and therefore could not have been the sources Ctesias claims to have used.[156] Posner, however, thinks that the 'royal archives' were a type of chronicle recording 'the daily record of royal actions and activities into which every royal decree was entered'. These registers, he argues, were a feature of the courts of Egypt, Assyria, Babylonia, and Israel, and even the Greeks had their own record of keeping 'daybooks' (*ephēmerides*).[157] Cawkwell too is more open to the idea of official royal records (written on hides):

> that there were such archives is not incredible, considering that Darius had ordered copies of the Behistun Inscription which had been written on clay and on parchment to be sent out to all parts of the kingdom, and the Persians were in general much given to keeping accounts, copies of documents, and the like.[158]

It is true that the Persians were fanatical about administrative records, and a testimony to their bureaucratic efficiency is seen in the so-called Persepolis Fortification Tablets, a huge series (some 8,000 are known) of (mainly) Elamite cuneiform texts dating to the reign of Darius I.[159] These document the economics of the heart of the Empire: most texts record food rations given to workers, travellers, and mothers, and even to cattle and camels. A series of records known as the Treasury Texts are dated to the reign of Artaxerxes I and record ration payments and the disbursements of silver from the Persepolis treasury. A final group of documents, written in Elamite and Imperial Aramaic, are the so-called *Q*-series from Persepolis, also known as Travel Texts, which outline rations provided for travellers and their animals.[160]

155 See Jacoby 1922, 2047; Sharwood Smith 1990, 9.
156 Briant 2002, 889.
157 Posner 1972, 126.
158 Cawkwell 2005, 14.
159 Hallock 1969.
160 See Hallock 1985 and Briant 2002, 422–424. See also Henkelman, forthcoming 2009.



Figure 6 The royal hero in combat: the Great King delivers the death blow to a lion. Here the lion represents chaos that the King, as the champion of truth and order, must vanquish. While this image has symbolic religious value, the hunting of lions was a popular royal sport. Ctesias suggests (F14 §43) that on a hunting expedition the slaying of a lion was the King's prerogative and that when the nobleman Megabyzus dared to kill a lion himself, Artaxerxes was furious and ordered his execution. The story might have at its root the notion that Megabyzus was attempting to usurp the throne through his appropriation of the image of royal lion slayer. Raised relief. Door jamb in the Hall of a Hundred Columns, Persepolis. Photograph: Lloyd Llewellyn-Jones.

Of course these cuneiform administrative documents are a long way off any official royal record, although we do hear of kings issuing official letters and edicts and copies of these must have been stored in a central archive.[161] Stronk argues that Ctesias' claims to have used royal documents be taken seriously and cites biblical evidence to support his case: both the books of *Ezra* (4.15; 5.2–6.2; written in Aramaic) and *Esther* (2.23; 6.1; 10.2; in Hebrew) refer to official documents, or books of annals.[162] Thus, in *Esther*, when an assassination plot is foiled, the guilty culprits, two eunuchs named Bigthan and Teresh, are arrested and executed:

> The matter was investigated and found to be so, and the two [eunuchs] were impaled on stakes. This was recorded in the book of annals at the insistence of the king.
>
> (*Esther* 2.23)

The book of *Ezra* goes further and speaks of a 'house of books (or archives)' in Babylon where official documents were stored (5.2–6.2). This should come as no surprise because the archival library system in Neo-Babylonia was strong and had taken its inspiration from the Assyrians. Assurbanipal, Assyria's last important ruler, had founded a library 'for royal contemplation' but also to archive official royal documents.[163]

The Old Testament provides only circumstantial evidence for the existence of royal Persian documents, and whether Ctesias did or did not use official Achaemenid annals of a narrative character cannot be confirmed one way or another. It is hard to imagine that Ctesias had the ability to read the ancient cuneiform scripts of the Near East, but he may have had them read aloud to him. Nevertheless, it is worth keeping in mind Stronk's opinion that, 'absence of proof does not equal proof of absence'.[164]

It is probable that Ctesias drew on a variety of written and oral sources in the composition of his Persian history. What is important, however, is that these sources came from inside Persia and most likely represented a considered response of the Persian aristocracy to their society and their history, in which they reinforced the

161 See the letter quoted in the Old Testament book of *Nehemiah* 2, 7–9. See also Stronk 2007, 109.

162 Stronk 2007, 107–109.

163 See Casson 2001, 9–16 and Beaulieu 2007.

164 Stronk 2007, 107.

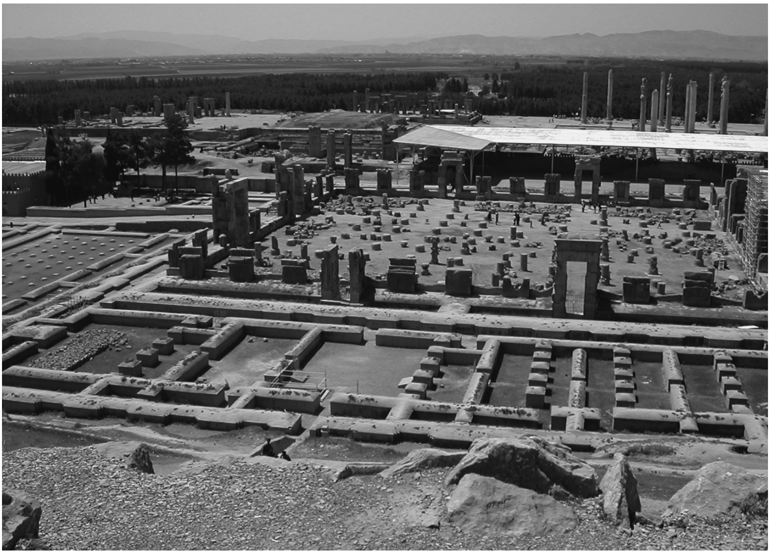


Figure 7 The impressive ruins of the vast ceremonial palace-city of Persepolis stands on a great raised platform towering above the Marv Dasht plain. It incorporates public audience halls and banqueting halls as well as several private palaces and administrative blocks. View of the site from a hillside (Shah-e kuh), which overlooks the palaces and contains two royal tombs from the fourth century BCE. Photograph: Lloyd Llewellyn-Jones.

centrality of the court and its hierarchical structure. As Oswyn Murray explains it:

> [The *Persica*] is truly a Persian history – not the invention of a Greek doctor, but an account of Persian court life as the Persian aristocracy saw it . . . It is a genuine expression of Persian traditions about the past.[165]

What does Murray mean by this? Let us take the question further: what possible evidence is there for a 'truly Persian history'?[166] Certainly the great Iranologist Arthur Emanuel Christensen thought that the Ctesian *basilikai diphtherai* were far more than dry annals and daily records. He regarded them as an account of royal events

165 Murray 2001, 42. See further below, pp. 183 n. 89.

166 The question has been raised, and exceptionally well explored, by Gera 1993, 13–22, to whom the present authors are indebted.

woven into an epic storyline, 'une litérature d'amusements'.[167] He cites a passage from *Esther* as support:

> On that night the king could not sleep, and he commanded to have brought the book of records of the chronicles; and they were read before the king. And it was found written, that Mordecai had told of Bigthan and Teresh, two of the king's eunuchs, the keepers of the door, who sought to lay hand on the king Ahasuerus.
>
> (*Esther* 6.1–2)

Here, argues Christensen, the insomniac king looks for distraction. Therefore, to keep the monarch entertained through the long sleepless night, the royal records must have been more than a dry list of daily events. Christensen goes further, however, and suggests that Persian epics of later centuries – the highly fragmentary Parthian *Book of Rulers* (*Xwaday Namag*), and the eleventh century CE Farsi *Book of Kings* (*Shahnahmeh*) by Ferdowsi – as their names suggest, were a continuation of a tradition of Achaemenid royal records and stories.[168]

In addition to any written record, there is a strong chance that the Persians recorded a form of their history through a purely oral tradition too, and that poetry and song, and maybe even prose, preserved stories of the Great Kings of the past. As has already been briefly noted, in the ancient Near East, communication was almost always oral and the art of storytelling itself was so central to society that it was often used in a communal setting. Storytellers rarely ever recited tales from rote memory; old traditions were usually updated and made alive with new examples, varying details, and shifting emphasis. This in itself could help to explain the nature of some of the older stories in Ctesias, and the confusion in 'facts' and chronology. Of course, we do not know what kind of stories Ctesias listened to in his years at the Persian court, since our knowledge of early Persian oral traditions is a blank, although it is hard to imagine that the Persians (or any peoples for that matter) had no form of storytelling customs at all. Greek sources certainly hint at a Persian literary tradition: Strabo suggests that the Persians received their schooling via a combination of instruction and storytelling in poetry and prose (15.3.18) and Herodotus relates that the Magi recited an Iranian

167 Christensen 1936, 117.

168 Christensen 1936, 119. It is difficult to imagine that entertainment was the primary function of royal chronicles, however.

theogony (1. 132). Athenaeus preserves an observation from Dinon in which court minstrels composed songs with political allegories (633 C–E); he also provides evidence for a romantic fourth-century BCE Persian folk-tale, the love story of Odatis and Zariadres (575A–F). This clearly has a parallel in Ctesias' Zarinaea romance and in Xenophon's story of Panthea, the Lady of Susa, contained in the *Cyropaedia* (see below). The Greeks also supply evidence of a Persian (maybe even Median) tradition for stories featuring Cyrus the Great. This is logical, as Deborah Levine Gera reasons:

> It would seem that the burden of proof lies upon those who would deny the Persians . . . any kind of folk narrative dealing with men of the past. Cyrus the Great, in particular, left his mark upon Babylonian and Jewish literature; it is difficult to believe that his own people did not commemorate him in some fashion.[169]

Herodotus states that he knows of three Persian versions of the life of Cyrus besides the one he presents to his Greek audience (1.95; cf. 1.214) and Xenophon mentions stories of Cyrus, which were circulating in his day also (*Cyropaedia* 1.2.1; cf. 1.4.25). Some of these stories may have been heard by Ctesias too; certainly he opted to recount one prevailing story (or perhaps an amalgamation of tales) about the youth and rise to power of Cyrus in the *Persica* (Fragment 8d* and Fragment 9). Of course we do not know if in the *Persica* Ctesias ever mentioned what his sources were for a given story.

Evidence for a Persian epic tradition is hard to come by, however, although some Iranologists suggest that certain tales found in later works have common elements or motifs, which can be identified in the Achaemenid-period writings of Ctesias, Herodotus, and Xenophon.[170] The masterpiece of Persian literature, the *Shahnameh* or *Epic of Kings*, written by Ferdowsi around 1000 CE, is a treasure-trove for story traditions about Iran's history, cultural values, ancient (pre-Islamic) religions and the profound sense of Persian nationhood; it contains the roots of many pre-Islamic oral traditions, although it is hard to trace a bona fide Achaemenid source in the Shahnameh's epic sweep.[171]

169 Gera 1993, 15.

170 Christensen 1936 makes the strongest case, but see also Nöldeke 1930. For a relationship between Iranian epic and the Greek tradition, see also Davis 2002.

171 See Davis 2006.

However, a Persian epic of the late Sasanian era (*c.* 500–600 CE) known as the *Book and Deeds of Ardashir, son of Papakan* (*Karnamag-i Ardashir i Papakan*), might prove more rewarding in a quest for an Achaemenid story-source. The *Karnamag*, which tells of the story of the boyhood and accession of Ardashir I of the Sasanian dynasty can be directly compared to the tale of the youth and rise to power of Cyrus the Great presented in Ctesias' *Persica* – as preserved by Nicolas of Damascus (Fragment 8d*). Both the *Persica*'s Cyrus and the *Karnamag*'s Ardashir are born into poor households, and their destined greatness is predicted through dreams. Both heroes serve as lackeys in a royal palace before their pre-destined greatness is eventually recognized and both flee the court, raise armies, and rebel against the established order. The legends surrounding the establishment of two great dynasties seem to have become confused, with the merged story eventually being set down in written form in the *Karnamag* whence it was transferred into the great *Shahnameh* itself. If this is the case, then Ctesias' tale of the formative years of Cyrus came from authentic Persian traditions and the *Karnamag* must, therefore, stem from an Achaemenid source too. It is enticing to speculate on the idea of a direct link between Ctesias' original Persian tradition and Ferdowsi's *Shahnameh*.[172]

'HISTORY' IN THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST

A notable feature of oral culture in the ancient Near East was a positive *dislike* for exact facts or specific dates. The peoples of the ancient East certainly had a keen sense of history, but thought about it differently from the way we do in the modern West. Persians, Babylonians, and Assyrians comprehended their past in terms of their myths, especially creation stories, and the grand tales of gods, heroes, and kings. Kingship as a manifestation of divine will stands at the centre of the Near Eastern concept of historical progression. The actual details of historical events within a reign were of less interest than the *pattern* by which the reign was explained in relation to mythic events. The visible events on earth were the reflections of the activities of the gods who communicated to men through the events they set in motion. Wars and conquests were often seen in this light. Thus, for example, the victory of Saul of Israel over the Amalekites is attributed to Yahweh's desire

172 Although it must be noted that the Achaemenid kings per se do not enter much into the *Shahnameh*. This is to do with the fact that the Farsi epic originates outside of Fars province, the Achaemenid homeland. See Davis 2006, xx.

to annihilate that troublesome race.[173] Likewise, the Assyrian king Sennacherib's defeat of an Arab tribe is put down to the fact that:

> the goddess of the [land of Arabia was] angered at Haza'el, king of Arabia, [and] . . . handed him over to Sennacherib . . . and caused his defeat. She (the goddess) determined not to remain with the people of Arabia and set out for Assyria.[174]

So too Cyrus the Great's liberation of Babylon from the oppressive regime of Nabonidus is accredited to the god Marduk, who is depicted in the Cyrus Cylinder actively seeking out a military hero to champion his beloved city and its inhabitants.[175]

Precision about the passage of time was of no importance in the Near Eastern conception of history. A king's reign might be recorded in regnal years, but that king's connection to the past was understood in the light of his memory and legacy in the future. In this respect, Ctesias' construction of Persian history, so focused on the reigns and legacies of monarchs, is in keeping with the Near Eastern feel for history generally, and the *Persica* emerges as a work that follows closely the traditions of Near Eastern conceptions of the past. The ancient pursuit of a coherent pattern in understanding history meant that a sense of 'what really happened' in history was gained in light of the outcome of events; time and hindsight are therefore the hallmarks of ancient Near Eastern narrative historiography.

Keeping the Near Eastern definition of 'history' in mind, it becomes clear that the *Persica* can be seen to operate in the general way of other Near Eastern approaches to history. Murray's assessment (see above) of the *Persica* as a type of Persian history written from the inside is quite apposite.

However, there is a further aspect to the composition of the *Persica* that is often overlooked. The *Persica* is connected to a historiographic tradition that was blossoming in the Near East in the period between the mid seventh and late fifth centuries BCE. This genre of history writing is now called 'Court History'. Best known of the genre is the Israelite work called the Davidic Court History. Written by scribes in the post-Solomon era, but in the age before the Hebrew deportment to Babylon, it is assumed by Biblical scholars that this Court History was reworked into the Old Testament canon in the post-exilic age,

173 *II Samuel* 15, 1–3.
174 K3405; Cogan 1974, 29–30.
175 Lines 10–12; Brosius 2000, 10. See also Glassner 2004.

that is to say in the Persian period, *c.*500–400 BCE. The original text of the Court History is believed to incorporate most of *II Samuel*, except for the first few chapters (and a few more minor parts), and the opening chapters of *I Kings*.[176]

The Court History centres on the reign of King David and concentrates for much of the time on the affairs of his family and retainers: his wives and their offspring, his ministers, and priests. It reveals the tensions within the Davidic court and plays up stories of intrigue, rebellion, and sexual adventures. David's lust for Bathsheba and the murder of her husband Uriah the Hittite, Amnon's rape of his half-sister Tamar, and Absalom's revenge and rebellion are all contained in *II Samuel*. *I Kings* reveals the political and sexual shenanigans surrounding the death of David as Queen Bathsheba fights for the succession rights of her son Solomon over the claims of his elder half-brother Adonijah (the so-called 'Throne Succession Narrative').[177]

Similarly, the Old Testament book of *Esther*, first crafted sometime around 400 BCE, shares many themes with the Davidic Court History. Set in the Achaemenid court at Susa, the book follows the exploits of a Jewish girl who enters the harem of the Great King, whom she eventually marries. She later uses her exalted rank to secure the safety of her people from persecution by Haman, an anti-Semitic high official who has access to the royal seal. Court intrigues and the machinations of prominent courtiers form the background to the story which is, most scholars agree, packed with incidental detail about Persian court life, palace protocol, the topography of Susa, and the like. Talmon suggests that:

> the author of the *Esther*-story shows an intimate knowledge of Persian court-etiquette and public administration . . . If his tale does not mirror historical reality, it is indeed well imagined.[178]

Why is *Esther* so *au fait* with Persian law, custom, and language? It is generally held that *Esther* was composed in the Achaemenid era, sometime in the early fourth century BCE, and that its author was very familiar with Persian institutions. Robert Gordis argues that:

176 Gray 1964, Hertzberg 1964, Baily 1990. For a lively interpretation of the Davidic Court History, see Kirsch 1997, 262–304.

177 See Friedman 2002, 196–208.

178 Talmon 1963, 420; see further Berg 1979, 2.

> The style [of the book] indicates a date of composition of approximately 400 BCE, only a few decades after the reign of Xerxes . . . There is a considerable number of Persian and Aramaic words and idioms. There are, however, no Greek words, a fact which clearly points to a pre-Hellenistic date.[179]

The Davidic Court History and *Esther* share numerous similarities with the themes of Ctesias' *Persica*. This is not to say that Ctesias was aware of the Davidic Court History and *Esther*, or that the Jewish scribes knew of Ctesias' work. However, it does point to a genre of history-writing that was perhaps current in Babylonia and the Levant in the later Achaemenid age, which centred on the affairs at the heart of government and, specifically, at the royal court. For John Marincola, 'Ctesias' work prefigures the court intrigue so familiar when history is written under an autocracy.'[180] Reports of influential royal women and court coups, even regicide, appear in these histories, not because they are flights of fancy on the part of imaginative authors, but because they are a reality of the system of absolute monarchy where the court is *ipso facto* the 'cradle of intrigue'.[181]

VII. CTESIAS' LITERARY STYLE

CTESIAS THE NOVELIST?

Earlier we considered Ctesias' role as the creator of a form of historical romance; indeed, Tim Whitmarsh has recently dubbed Ctesias' work a 'romanticised Persian history', while Marincola too sees the *Persica* as 'an historical narrative [which] contained much palace intrigue and seems to have frequently shaded into romance'.[182] It is time to take this idea further. A form of historical fiction was certainly taking shape in the literary climate of Ctesias' day, although the Greek novel per se did not begin to flourish until the later centuries of the

179 Gordis 1974, 8. See also Moore 1971, iii. For an even earlier dating see Talmon 1963, 449 and Berg 1979, 2 who states: 'The number of Persian words in *Esther* and its numerous Aramaisms suggest the story's composition during a period not far from the events it describes [the reign of Xerxes].'

180 Marincola 1997, 22, n. 106.

181 Stronk 2007, 114.

182 Whitmarsh 2008, 2. Marincola 1997, 22. For a further discussion of Ctesias as a proto-novelist, see Holzberg 1992. It is debatable whether we should think of Ctesias (and Xenophon for that matter) as a predecessor of the Hellenistic novelist. See further Auberger 1995.

Hellenistic period, sometime in the first century BCE. One name we could use for the *Persica* is 'novella'. This is an apposite term, because a novella is a story of limited length, intended to entertain, and with a plot which, typically, operates around the reversal in fortunes of a central character. A novella is concerned with ostensibly 'real-life' characters (although not all necessarily drawn from history) in 'real-life' settings. Ostensibly Ctesias' *Persica* is made up of a string of short (and longer) novellas interspersed into a historical framework to form a continuous narrative.

The novella was a growing hallmark of literature during Ctesias' lifetime. Xenophon (as we will explore) was certainly familiar with the genre, and in fact much of the history of the time was composed in this way. Herodotus and Thucydides certainly contain characteristics of the novella. The novella is found in Hebrew writing of the era too. The Hebrew version of the biblical book of *Esther* has all the hallmarks a novella (the final Greek version of the text, however, probably developed into its canonical form in the immediate centuries after Ctesias). The story is set in a precise location (Susa; *Esther* 1.2), at a specific time (the third year of the reign of Ahasuerus, aka Xerxes; *Esther* 1.3), and follows two classic reversal of fortune scenarios: as Esther and Mordecai rise from obscurity to their exalted positions at court, so the wicked Haman, the king's chief minister, falls from grace and is executed. Here the unknown author of *Esther* has chosen to set his story at a precise moment in time and in an exact locale and has to face his critics on the thoroughness of his research and his use of historical data. To look at the historical accuracy of his work is a legitimate act (and many Biblical scholars have attempted to do just this), but that does not prejudge the question of literary genre.[183] Indeed, there are several marks of history writing in *Esther* – the book actually opens with the phrase 'it came to pass' (*Esther* 1.1) – and the author presents his work as if it were history, although the kind of detailed information he gives the reader (including a note on the extent of the Empire; *Esther* 1.1) is as much at home in the historical novella as it is in history proper.

The Greek author Xenophon, Ctesias' contemporary, certainly used the novella form within his historical works. His *Cyropaedia* (*Education of Cyrus*), a didactic semi-fictionalized biography of Cyrus the Great (which is in fact a fawning panegyric about Cyrus the Younger) contains no fewer than four novellas interwoven into the

183 For a good discussion of *Esther*, its background, and its place in scholarship, see Berlin 2001.

main historical narrative. These are the stories of Panthea the Lady of Susa (5.1.1–30; 6.1.30–55; 6.4.1–20; 7.3.3–17), King Croesus (7.2.1–29), prince Gobryas (4.6.1–12; 5.2.1–14; 5.4.41–51), and Gadatas the chieftain (5.3.15–4.51) – all four either royal or noble Asiatics. Xenophon uses the novellas carefully throughout the main body of the historical work and each of the four stories share several important, and overlapping, features:

1 All four stories are presented episodically and are fitted into the wider picture of the *Cyropaedia.*
2 The stories are no mere digressions but are linked into the *Cyropaedia*'s main narrative framework.
3 While the tales are narrated with brevity, nonetheless they often contain scenes of emotional intensity and grandiloquence.
4 Most importantly, perhaps, the novellas are frequently interspersed with dialogues, which form an important aspect of the way in which the stories are told.[184]

Interestingly, the four characteristics of Xenophon's novellas are to be found in Ctesias' *Persica* too, and this naturally leads us to question both the relationship between the *Cyropaedia* and the *Persica*, and the bigger question of Ctesias' relationship to the Greek novella as a whole.[185] Certainly the first surviving Hellenistic novels, like the fragmentary *Ninus Romance* and the complete *Challirhoe* by Chariton (both dated to the first century BCE), exploit the conventions of history writing and provide historical settings for the action that follows. So much so, in fact, that early scholars believed that the origins of the Greek novel could be found in 'bad' history (supposedly like the *Persica* of Ctesias). This idea has been discounted in favour of viewing the novel as a genre arising from, but different from, historiography (although the cross-over points between the genres are often deliberately blurred).[186] However, the author of an early novel must have been aware that he was writing something different from 'conventional' history. Ctesias (and Xenophon with his *Cyropaedia* also) must have made the decision to write his *Persica* in a specific way in which the affinities between history and novella-style story-telling would be developed in his own literary form. At no

184 See the full discussion in Gera 1993, 192 ff.
185 To a certain extent the question can be postulated for the novellas of Xenophon's *Anabasis* and *Hellenica* too. See Gera 1993, 211–215. See also Due 1989.
186 Morgan 2007.

point was Ctesias under the illusion that he was writing straight history. That is our longstanding misconception of his work.

However, as has been suggested above, Ctesias and Xenophon did not write full-scale novels, but the more manageable form of the novella. Xenophon's four novellas in the *Cyropaedia* exist in their entirety, but can they be used to throw light on the way in which Ctesias constructed the *Persica*? Interestingly, the wide range of stock characters found in Xenophon's novellas are often 'exotic' types – an indolent king, a frightened eunuch, a cruel despot, a brave warrior, a grief-stricken father, a devoted slave, and a beautiful but chaste woman. But where do Xenophon's characters come from? Do they originate with Ctesias? There can be little doubt that Xenophon drew on Ctesias' *Persica* as a source of inspiration for his novellas, although Xenophon's own sojourn within the Persian Empire, as well as his own active imagination, can account for much of what else is contained in the *Anabasis* and the *Cyropaedia*. However, it is feasible to claim that there is a connection between Xenophon's use of the novella in the *Cyropaedia*, and Ctesias' use of stories in the *Persica*. The astonishing similarity between the Zarinaea story in the *Persica* and that of Panthea in the *Cyropaedia* is in itself enough to take the claim seriously. But was Xenophon actually imitating Ctesias' own use of the novella format?

Certainly, the character-types of the *Persica* seem to be replicated later by Xenophon. This is especially true of female characters: Xenophon's Panthea and Ctesias' Semiramis and Zarinaea are noble and powerful women who exert considerable influence over the men around them. Each of these women is excessively beautiful, and each finds herself at the heart of battle, and at the centre of romantic, and ultimately tragic, conflict. Interestingly, both authors make use of a love triangle motif: Xenophon creates a romantic interest around the figures of Abradatas-Panthea-Araspas, while Ctesias utilizes Onnes-Semiramis-Ninus for the same effect. Both authors use the spectacle of the suicide of a loving and loyal spouse as a climactic event. Most importantly, and transparently, are the similarities between the figures of Panthea and Zarinaea. Both of the beautiful women reject her would-be lover to preserve her marital honour; both admirers kill themselves because of unfulfilled passion. It is clear, as we have seen from the twenty-nine lines of *Papyrus Oxyrhynchus* 2330 (Fragment 8c*), that the Stryangaeus-Zarinaea story also included a reflection on the power of *erōs* and the need to find restraint in passion, a debate which, fascinatingly, Xenophon also includes in the Panthea novella:

> 'Then,' said Cyrus, 'if love be voluntary, why cannot a man cease to love when he wishes? I have seen men in love,' said he, 'who have wept for very agony, who were the very slaves of those they loved, though before the fever took them they thought slavery the worst of evils. I have seen them make gifts of what they ill could spare, I have seen them praying, yes, praying, to be rid of their passion, as though it were any other malady, and yet be unable to shake it off; they were bound hand and foot by a chain of something stronger than iron. There they stood at the beck and call of their idols, and that without rhyme or reason; and yet, poor slaves, they make no attempt to run away, in spite of all they suffer; on the contrary, they mount guard over their tyrants, for fear these should escape.'
>
> (Xenophon, *Cyropaedia* 5.12)

There seems to be a distinct parallel between the philosophical debate on the power of Love encountered in Ctesias and Xenophon. It is also clear that Ctesias created fully-rounded characters (certainly the female ones) and that these figures have much in common with characterizations found in Xenophon's novellas. Moreover, there is every probability that Ctesias' characters had moments of reflection in which they mused on abstract themes and concerns. But there is another important key to understanding the nature of how the novella operated in the *Persica*: the characters utilize direct speech. Dialogue is the central feature of the novella-format.

Dialogue clearly punctuates Xenophon's novellas at every stage of action. But what role did dialogue play in the *Persica*? This is hard to ascertain. Unfortunately, the Photian *epitome* gives only one instance of speech in the whole of the long summary:

> Cambyses called Labyxus, Tanyoxarces' chief eunuch, along with the others, and pointing out the Magus, who was sitting there playing his role, said, 'Do you think that man is Tanyoxarces?' And Labyxus said in amazement, 'Who else are we to think he is?'
>
> (Fragment 13 Photius §13)

This affords us little knowledge of the function of speech in the whole work, and we are no more fortunate in gleaning any information from Diodorus' *epitome* either. Diodorus' summary contains not a single example of direct speech, although there are several narrative

sequences that might have been easily punctuated by dialogue in Ctesias' original. Ninus' confrontation with Onnes over Semiramis' love and the exchange of messages between the queen and the Indian king almost certainly needed dialogue for the scenes to work. However we are better served with the Ctesian fragments of Nicolas of Damascus; these do contain several passages of dialogue which were, in all probability, copied directly from the *Persica* (Fragment 8c*, 93–108; Fragment 8d*).

However, the strongest evidence we have for the use of dialogue in the *Persica* is found in the Testimonia (T14a). Probably written in the first century BCE, Demetrius' treatise *On Style* is an important piece of evidence for the rhetorical education of the Hellenistic period. It is a matter of debate whether Demetrius intended his treatise to be a handbook of rhetoric or a work of literary criticism, but it is possible that Demetrius wrote it for pupils who had completed preliminary courses in rhetoric. In Testimonium 14a Demetrius comments with approval on the way in which Ctesias used dialogue for dramatic effect. He provides an analysis of a brief vignette in which a messenger tentatively breaks the news to Parysatis about the death of her son, Cyrus the Younger, on the battlefield at Cunaxa. The queen asks direct questions and the messenger provides the answers step-by-step; as he reluctantly proffers the information, so the *gravitas* of the report slowly escalates:

> For the messenger comes but does not tell Parysatis straightaway that Cyrus has died – this is what is called a 'Scythian discourse' – rather, he first announced that he was winning and she was pleased and worried. Afterwards she asks, 'How is the King faring?' And he says that he has taken flight. And she retorts, 'Yes, it is Tissaphernes who is responsible for what has happened to him.' And she asks again, 'Where is Cyrus now?' And the messenger replies, 'In the place where brave men have to camp.' Continuing with difficulty, gradually and bit by bit, he finally blurted it out, as they say – thus showing very expressively and vividly that the messenger was reporting the disaster against his will and throwing both his mother and the listener into anguish.
>
> (Testimonium 14a. 216)

This so-called 'Scythian discourse' is intended for dramatic effect. Both Parysatis and Ctesias' reader goes through a suspenseful journey

of discovery and the *gravitas* of the news of Cyrus' demise is experienced by Parysatis and the audience in real time. The overall effect, says Demetrius, is that of *enargeia*, or 'vividness', as the listener is forced to enter into the Queen Mother's anguish. Here, of course *enargeia* is linked with dramatic *pathos* (although *enargeia* is something that was admired in history writing too).[187] The suffering that is experienced by a character in a text (in this case, Parysatis) is replicated by the reader.

The scene operates on the Aristotelian principle of *peripeteia*, a reversal of circumstances or turning point, which Aristotle regarded as the most powerful part of a plot in a tragedy alongside discovery (*anagnôrisis*).[188] But interestingly, the same techniques employed by the tragedians can also enter into Greek historiographic writings too, for tragedy and history are connected.[189] Both genres are essentially mimetic and both are fundamentally indebted to the epic tradition (we will return to this relationship below). Greek history writing could therefore replicate standard tragic scenes or, at the very least, utilize tragic devices. Consider a well-known passage from Thucydides' *History of the Peloponnesian War* (3.113) in which a herald asks the Acarnanians for the return of the Ambraciot dead. The visiting herald is amazed to see a mound of armour piled high as a proud war trophy, but he does not realize that the equipment belongs to his

187 Plutarch (*On the Glory of Athens* 347A) praises Thucydides for his vivid history writing.

188 In the *Poetics*, Aristotle emphasizes that 'actions which excite pity and fear' are 'the distinctive mark of tragic imitation' (1452b 30). In turn, pity and fear are put into effect through reversal and recognition. Thus in Sophocles' *Oedipus the King*, the *peripeteia* occurs towards the end of the play when Oedipus is brought news of his parentage by the messenger. *Peripeteia* and *anagnôrisis* occur at the same time to give maximum dramatic impact. Oedipus is at once transformed from the powerful king of Thebes to an object of pity and scorn. The Aristotelian notion of *peripeteia* and *anagnôrisis*, coupled with a sense of *enargeia* is a dramatic device frequently used by tragic poets. Aristotle regarded the Euripidrean *Iphigenia Among the Taurians*, with its synchronized *anagnôrisis* and *peripeteia* occurring before, and not after, the violent *pathos* of the plot as the pinnacle of tragic writing (*Poetics* 1455a34–b16). The neatest parallel to Ctesias' messenger scene, as recounted by Demetrius, however, comes from the Shakespearean canon: in *Antony and Cleopatra* (Act 2 sc. 5), the Egyptian queen questions a messenger from Rome about Mark Antony's exploits during his absence from Egypt. Only slowly, through Demetrius' 'Scythian discourse', does the messenger reveal the fact that Antony has taken a Roman wife.

189 For a discussion of enargeia in Greek historiography, see Walker 1993.

slaughtered comrades. Thucydides helps to dramatize the incident through his use of dialogue:

> Someone, under the mistaken idea that the herald had come from the troops at Idomene, asked him what he was so surprised about and inquired how many had been killed. 'About two hundred', said the herald.
>
> 'Not if we are to judge by the arms here,' said the other man, taking him up. 'Why, they come to more than a thousand.'
>
> 'Then', said the herald, 'they cannot be the arms of those who were fighting with us.'
>
> 'They certainly are,' said the other – 'that is, if you were fighting at Idomene yesterday.'
>
> 'But there was no fighting at all yesterday,' said the herald. 'It was the day before, in the retreat.'
>
> 'However that may be,' said the other man, 'we were certainly fighting with these men yesterday. It was a relief force coming from the city of the Ambraciots.'

Thucydides then lapses back into the narrated authorial voice to 'objectivize' the scene and explain its dramatic impact:

> On hearing this, the herald realized that the reinforcements coming from the city had been destroyed. He cried out loud and, overwhelmed by the extent of the disaster, went away at once without doing what he came to do and without asking any more for the recovery of the corpses.

In a typically tragic vein, Thucydides uses the powerful dramatic device of simultaneous *peripeteia* and *anagnôrisis*; he combines a reversal of fortune with the recognition of a fact. In the *Persica* it would appear that the Ctesias' messenger scene operates on the same principles of *peripeteia* and *anagnôrisis*, and, as in the dénouement of Sophocles' *Oedipus the King*, the news of Cyrus the Younger's fall from power and his untimely death is revealed slowly and methodically.

From all of this it is feasible to suppose that the *Persica* made frequent use of dramatic dialogue and that Ctesias' history was peppered with direct speech that made his work an engaging, vivid, and compulsive read. But can more be said about the integration of the novellas into the *Persica en masse*? Deborah Levine Gera suggests that the *Persica* was, in fact, 'a chain of novellas, arranged

in chronological order and interspersed into descriptions of lands, customs, battles and the concrete achievements of each noteworthy monarch.'[190] This is a sensible observation, although it must be said that it is impossible to know if the novellas of the *Persica* were broken up into several episodes – as in Xenophon – or recounted as one complete tale. Certainly Ctesias' narration about Parysatis' ongoing vendetta against Terituchmes and Rhoxane and the scattered episodic stories concerning Megabyzus suggest that the novellas were episodic. Of course, we need to acknowledge the possibility that this may simply be a feature of Photius' *epitome*.

It is unlikely that the novellas were thrown at random into the structure of the book, for there is a strong sense of balance in the overall organization of the *Persica* through which history and novella seamlessly progress together. This can be demonstrated by Ctesias' use of two principal female characters: at the beginning of the *Persica* the stage is dominated by the figure of the legendary Queen Semiramis, 'the most remarkable of all women of whom we have a record' (Fragment 1b. §4.1), while in the latter part of the work, it is the historical Queen Parysatis, Ctesias' patroness, who rules supreme. Ctesias' use of these powerful females is interesting, for he appears to fashion the character of the historical Parysatis after the model of the mythical Semiramis. In doing so he pays homage to the Achaemenid queen. Parysatis is crafted as a second Semiramis. Just as he weaves the Assyrian Queen into a series of tales which centralize her position in the early part of the *Persica*, so too Ctesias spins a series of dramas around the central figure of Parysatis as the *Persica* rushes towards its *dénouement*. He uses the figures and actions of the two women as a means of bringing his work from the mythical past into the historical present as Semiramis the queen of legend makes way for Parysatis, the queen of historical fact. The literary tactic Ctesias employs to dramatize their stories and define their characters, however, remains the same.

It is clear that, on all levels, Ctesias is deliberately blending historical fact and novella-style storytelling in order to create a rich, fluid, and gripping historical drama.

CTESIAS THE POET

Demetrius' reflection on Ctesias' style is invaluable, for he aids our understanding of how the *Persica* worked as a piece of literature.

190 Gera 1993, 209.

We are fortunate, therefore, that Demetrius commented at some length on Ctesias' written style, for he offers considerable information about the *Persica*'s literary construction. He notes (Testimonium 14a) that Ctesias had been criticised for his long-windedness and his repetitiveness (note Plutarch's jibe in Testimonium 14b), but he defends Ctesias' use of repetitions by arguing that they are utilized in the text to add drama to a story. He quotes a line given by Ctesias to his Stryangaeus when he writes to Zarinaea: 'I saved you and you were saved by me, and I am done for because of you'.[191] Demetrius then goes on to explain how this repetition functions, for, he says, it helps to add vividness (*enargeia*) and *pathos* to the work. Then Demetrius does something quite remarkable: he specifically calls Ctesias a 'poet' (*poiētēs*). What does Demetrius mean by this?

On the most obvious level Ctesias cannot be classified as a poet, certainly not in the way that Homer or the Attic tragedians are known as poets. Ctesias, after all, does not write in meter, a defining characteristic of what we regard as poetry. But this is a narrow understanding of what poetry is, and it is likely that Demetrius' reference to Ctesias as a *poiētēs* reflects the way that Aristotle uses that term in the *Poetics*. Here Aristotle discusses authors who write about the past, and makes the first attempt to distinguish between 'historian' and 'poet':

> The difference between a historian and a poet is not that one writes in meter and the other without meter: for if the work of Herodotus was put into meter it would be nothing less than a kind of history with meter or without meter. But it differs this way: that one writes what happened, the other what might happen.
>
> (Aristotle, *Poetics* 9.2)

Aristotle elucidates further:

> It is the function of a poet to relate not things that have happened, but things that could happen, in other words, things that are possible in accordance with probability or necessity.
>
> (Aristotle, *Poetics* 9.1)

191 It is, of course, thanks to this citation by Demetrius that scholars were able to identify *Papyrus Oxyrhynchus* 2330 (Fragment 8c*) as the authentic voice of Ctesias.

If we see the *Persica* in the light of Aristotle's theory, then Demetrius' labelling of Ctesias as a poet is particularly *apropos*. We noted above the link between history and tragedy, so regarding Ctesias as a poet is not altogether heretical. In fact the intellectual climate of Demetrius' age might even have favoured a form of 'tragic historiography', although the origin of this approach to the writing of history (and even the validity of the term itself) has been much debated.[192] But the Hellenistic enthusiasm for 'tragic history' might account for Demetrius' enthusiastic response to the *Persica*.

However, by filtering the *Persica* through an Aristotelian prism, we can now regard the work as one in which historiography – composed from a reliable core of historical facts – is blurred into a kind creative dramatic history or historical novella. We might classify the *Persica* as a work of 'faction'. As Stronk's perceptive reading of the *Persica* has it, 'what happened or what was said to have happened or even what could have happened and never happened at all is indistinguishably mixed'.[193] However, it is important to recognize the idea that as Ctesias' chronological narrative moved closer to his own period, then fiction in the text diminished and gave way to increasing amount of fact. Certainly Ctesias' account of the reign of Artaxerxes II, his master and employer, is imbued with more facts and details than his reports of earlier reigns. This becomes apparent from Fragment 29a, where Plutarch prefers to follow Ctesias' dating for the poisoning of Queen Stateira over Dinon's dating of the same event. As Plutarch stresses:

> Although Dinon has stated that [Parysatis' plot to kill Stateira] was carried out during the war, Ctesias says it was carried out later; and it is hardly likely that Ctesias was ignorant of the timing since he was there when it happened, nor did he have any reason deliberately to relocate the event in his narrative from the time when it occurred . . . this event must occupy the place that he gave it.
>
> (Fragment 29a)

Ctesias' literary balancing act with the twin figures of Semiramis and Parysatis also strengthens the idea that history-proper thickens in the final books of the *Persica*.

192 See Rutherford 2007.

193 Stronk Forthcoming. His discussion of Ctesias as a poet is of utmost importance.

Herein, of course, lies the cause of the frustrations that many scholars have felt with Ctesias. Ctesias refuses to be pinned down as an author of any specific genre. Approaching Ctesias' work causes us confusion, because when we read history we do not expect to find fantasy there too; nor do we necessarily expect to experience tragic *pathos* in a narrative history. Ctesias has been condemned for writing a melodramatic history, but as Richard Rutherford has noted:

> the assumption that only bad historians 'go tragic' needs to be firmly dismissed . . . Tragic history is not a self-standing genre or a phase in a genre's development: it is more like a particular colour in an artist's palette, used in specific places for a particular effect.[194]

Ctesias uses a particularly rich palette of colours and he displays no reluctance to paint purely to give pleasure.

But should we feel pleasure when reading history? The Hellenistic historian Duris of Samos (*c.* 340–260 BCE) certainly thought that pleasure (*hēdonē*) should be a necessary leitmotif in the writing of any history. His critique of earlier historians is an important comment on the conceptualisation of history writing:

> Ephorus and Theopompus fell far short of the events. They achieved no imitation of nature (*mimēsis*) or pleasure (*hēdonē*) in their presentation, but were merely concerned with writing.
> (*FGrHist* 76 F1)

In other words, Duris suggests that a good historian should try to present his readers with a dramatic scenario, or at least give the illusion of a drama. He implies (no doubt with Aristotle in mind) that the past can be better communicated if imagination is combined with historical reporting and interpretation. *Hēdonē* is more important than rigid adherence to facts.

Pleasure was the touchstone of reading Ctesias in antiquity, or so it would appear from the various Testimonia. As far as Demetrius was concerned, the pleasure of reading Ctesias derived, as we have noted, from his vividness (*enargeia*). Ctesias was a 'master of vividness' (Testimonium 14a). Dionysius of Halicarnassus, in his work *On Literary Composition*, observed that Ctesias' prose was 'as pleasurable as possible' and, although it lacks a certain beauty, he says, 'the

194 Rutherford 2007, 514.

arrangement of passages can be pleasurable' (Testimonium 12). Photius was far more enthusiastic in his praise. Ctesias, he confirms, is a straightforward read, but his style gives great enjoyment:

> The pleasure of his history comes mainly in the way he elaborates his tales with a lot of *pathos* and surprising twists and in the way it is adorned with so much variety in a way similar to fables.
>
> (Testimonium 13)

Ctesias clearly enjoyed a wide readership in antiquity, and it becomes apparent that people engaged with his style. Some 500 years after his death, the tradition in which he worked (indeed, the tradition he perhaps founded) was still in operation. As Quintillian observed:

> Historiography is very close to poetry and is somehow a sort of poetry-in-prose. It is written for a narrative purpose, not for facts, and a historian creates his oeuvre not to argue and win a court case, but to give posterity something to remember and to win glory for its author.
>
> (Quintillian, *Institutions* 10.1.31)

So in the *Persica* Ctesias gives us a work of historical fact, which is mixed with, amongst other things, fables and fantasy tales, gossip and prejudice, stereotypes and speculation. But the mix is so dense that each aspect of the composition bleeds into the next and any barrier between history and poetry is impossible to see. The result is a work of great novelty and ingenuity and clearly one that exercised great appeal in antiquity.

VIII. CONCLUSION: UNICORNS AND PARROTS REVISITED

We began this Introduction by examining the nature of Giles Foden's historical novel *The Last King of Scotland* and we tentatively speculated on how Ctesias' *Persica* might be best read and understood. Now, at the close of this short study, are we any closer to understanding the nature of the *Persica*? Can we get a handle on Ctesias' masterwork? Certainly, it has become clear that, although we might suppose that history and fiction are almost antonyms, this is not the case. Historical fictitious narratives test our boundaries of credibility. They dance on a tightrope of actuality and illusion.

Ctesias is not a straightforward historian. We have seen that he is actually a poet-cum-novellist working within the framework of history. History is present in the *Persica*, but not in the form we have come to expect. Even if we are prepared to accept Ctesias as a 'historian', then we must concede that he narrows the line of vision of his historical enquiry down to an exact pinpoint. He predominantly records events at court. Why? Because Ctesias himself is a courtier and the Persia he knows is the Persia of the royal residence at the heart of the Empire. This does not necessarily negate any interest he has in the bigger political picture of Greco-Persian relations, nor does it mean that the *Persica* was devoid of any political message, it is simply that Ctesias opts (through necessity) to explore the Persian world from its royal centre. At court he works with his Persian (and Babylonian, and possibly even Assyrian) sources to produce a history of Persia from the inside, and as such he is in tune with an Eastern approach to history in general. He adds to that a Greek inquisitiveness about the East and his own interpretation of what he sees and hears. He augments this with an imaginative elaboration that befits a good novelist.

Nonetheless, Ctesias' observations of events at the royal court, especially during the period of his residency in Persia, have a ring of truth to them. The account of the reign of Artaxerxes II is not a sensationalist tragic history but a court history, written along the lines of other court histories created at that time, and as such it records the kind of machinations, plots, tensions, and cruelties that are present at the courts of all absolute rulers. In this respect, Giles Foden's account of the paranoid power games at the 'court' of Idi Amin Dada works in the same way as the *Persica*. Even though Foden's narrative is founded on fact, it is nevertheless fiction.

Ctesias of Cnidus might not have had the breadth of vision or Herodotus' thoroughness when it came to scrutinizing historical facts, but we must acknowledge that Ctesias was not writing in the same genre as Herodotus. He was concerned with presenting new and different accounts of the Near Eastern past, which he had found preserved in numerous eastern traditions, literary and oral. So can Ctesias' *Persica* be used as a history? To answer this, let us once more recall the *Indica*'s composition. As we have seen, the *Indica* is a *Persian* take on its semi-mythic neighbour. We cannot (and should not) use the *Indica* to reconstruct a political or cultural history of the subcontinent, for this, after all, is the land of the fabled unicorn. But we must be grateful to Ctesias for preserving this legend and the fact that the Indian unicorn was obviously a part of the Persian

imagination. But from the *Indica*, we must also remember that this was the land of the Greek-speaking parrot, a bird whose description by Ctesias at least matches our own knowledge. Out of the fantastical comes the verifiable; even a *Book of Wonders* can proffer accurate factual information. The same point stands for the combination of history and storytelling that is the *Persica*. This *is* a work of history, but a history composed mainly from a Persian and Babylonian tradition. Ctesias' chief objective was not to painstakingly reconstruct the history of the Near East modelled on a western concept of how history must be narrated, but to allow his Greek-speaking readers into another mindset. The *Persica* can be used as a history because it records the way in which the Persians remembered or imagined their past.

With this in mind, can Ctesias really be guilty of constructing a negative 'Orient', as Sancisi-Weerdenburg and others have contended? As we have noted, Edward Said's theory of Orientalism is an idiosyncratic means of representing 'Otherness'. Sancisi-Weerdenburg, following Said, focused on the idea of the text as a cultural construct, or what might be called the 'use-is-abuse' school of thought. The result of this type of stance, argues Daniel Varisco, is that:

> any Western author who cites an imaginary or fanciful Orient thus becomes complicit *expressis verbis* in the verbal misrepresentation of real Orientals. 'Orientalism overrode the Orient' is the overarching motto of Orientalism.[195]

In his seminal work, Said pointed to, and condemned, the Athenian tragedian Aeschylus as the originator of a destructive doctrine in which Europe is seen as powerful and articulate while Asia is regarded as defeated and distracted; this viewpoint has not gone unchallenged.[196] Aeschylus' play *The Persians* is not the beginning of the Eurocentrism that Said would like to see; if one reads anything into this play then it must be the *hybris* of a Greek poet praising the gods for the military prowess of Athens. Reflecting on Said's opinion of Aeschylus, however, Sancisi-Weerdenburg was prepared to see Ctesias as a far more harmful exponent of Orientalism because his work, as she read it, creates the myth of 'Oriental Decadence'. Ctesias, with his focus on the affairs of court, on royal women, and on eunuchs, is therefore the exponent of a particularly low, passé, and offensive

195 Varisco 2007, 232.
196 See, for example, Harrison 2000.

visualization of the Eastern 'Other' – 'the jewel in the navel' school of Orientalism, as it were.

This *j'accuse* of criticism needs to be tempered. Representation of any culture, especially by somebody writing in another language or from an outsider's perspective, is never going to be an exact duplication of the core culture itself, but in his work, Ctesias attempted to understand Persian history by recording and preserving bona fide Persian ideas of the past. Ctesias does indeed create the 'Orient', but an Orient on the Orient's terms (or at least as close to the Orient's terms as a non-Persian could understand). He is not concerned with creating a generic caricature of 'the Oriental', but a nuanced picture of the culturally and historically significant Persians. Orientalist readings of ancient Greek texts about the Persian Empire are possible – consider Plato's representation of the imperial harem as the route of royal degeneracy (*Laws* 695a–696a) or the problematic Epilogue of the *Cyropaedia* with its diatribe against Persian effeminacy – but it would be hard to lay all of this ugly xenophobia at the feet of Ctesias. The Greeks of Plato's day were open to a range of pictures of Eastern Otherness coming from many different sources, which carried as many diverse agendas.

For his part, and unsurprisingly given the sources at his disposal and his agenda in writing a history of the East from the inside, Ctesias penned a pro-Persian history of Persia. Lucian confirms this in his somewhat perversely tongue-in-cheek treatise *How to Write History*:

> The one task of the historian is to relate how things happened: he [Ctesias] would not be able to do this inasmuch as he was either afraid of Artaxerxes (whose doctor he was) or because he hoped to receive a purple kaftan and a Nisaean horse as payment for praising him in his writing.
>
> (Testimonium 11hδ)

In other words, Lucian clearly regarded the *Persica* as a work in which the achievements of the Great Kings of Persia are lauded and eulogized.[197] This is against the natural order, at least as far as Greek accounts of history go. A sweeping history, which exalts the achievements of the Persian monarchy but marginalizes the Greeks? Impossible! What could have motivated Ctesias to write such a pro-Persian book? Lucian supplies the answer: either fear of King

197 In this Ctesias might have set a trend for later historians. See Marincola 1997, 89–90.

Artaxerxes or unashamed toadying on Ctesias' part. But there is no evidence to suggest that Ctesias ever promised impartiality in this work, and so if we read between the lines of Lucian, we have a hint here of Ctesias' positive assessment on the Persian past. As Marincola has it:

> Ctesias' claim to authority, with its access to 'privileged' information, presupposes a different type of history: Ctesias wrote of conflicts between a king and the Greek city-states, in which court intrigue was given a prominent role . . . More importantly, he wrote with the purpose of presenting events from a Persian point of view, so that it was unnecessary to make a corresponding declaration about his sources from the Greek side. No pretence of impartiality seems to have been given, nor were the historical events themselves his exclusive concern. Ctesias promised accuracy but not necessarily impartiality of viewpoint.[198]

Nonetheless, as we have discovered, Ctesias' work has been co-opted to serve an Orientalist agenda, although the *Persica* actually contains very little of the expected Orientalist clichés. Real decadence, in the sense of scenes of luxury and debauchery, are hard to find in the work, certainly once the *Persica*'s chronological narrative pushes beyond the legendary reign of Sardanapallus (Fragment 1b 23.1), and this king, it must be conceded, was already a byword for luxury well before Ctesias. It is also worth noting that, in his use of Ctesias, Diodorus might have conjured up a Sardanapallus of his own imagination, in the same way as he may have reworked the figure of Semiramis.[199] Interestingly, Ctesias' epitomists and his later users never cite him as an author with a particular penchant for the spicy or salacious. He tells good stories, yes, but not necessarily titillating ones.

So what then do we make of Ctesias' vignettes of powerful queens and eunuchs? It is clear that the royal women of Achaemenid Persia did not live in purdah, nor did they inhabit an Orientalist world of sultry sensuality, but they did form part of a strict hierarchical court structure that moved in close proximity to the king.[200] As a component of his harem (in the *true* pre-Saidian sense of the word –

198 Marincola 1997, 170.

199 See above and Compoli 2002.

200 Brosius 1996, 2007 and Llewellyn-Jones 2002 and forthcoming 2009. On the importance of the harem and polygamy in ancient empires, see Scheidel 2009.

his inner court), they followed the peripatetic lifestyle of the Great King.[201] The royal women's importance lay in their allegiance to the maintenance of dynastic power.[202] The Achaemenid dynasty was, after all, essentially a centrally run family business and at the heart of the operation lay the harem, the king's domestic inner circle of women, offspring, siblings, and slaves. Ctesias' stories of female power and agency always operate around the safeguarding of the throne and the preservation of personal power. Stories of sexual shenanigans, the stuff of Orientalist dreams, are kept to a minimum, and even when they do appear, they serve a bigger picture. Royal women fight over rank and position and privilege, and when eunuchs overreach their allotted positions and aim for the throne, the queens act swiftly and punish them.[203] For the women, men, and eunuch slaves of the royal family, prestige and access to power lay in their proximity to the king.

The squabbles, rivalries, double-dealings, murders, and executions must be seen in the context of dynastic politics. Persia was controlled by an absolute ruler – that is not Orientalist cliché, it is a fact. Absolute monarchies are open to a particular form of political tension, which usually focuses on the royal family and on the noble families that surround the king. Within such institutions, women of the dynastic family often rise to positions of political agency, not through any formal route to power, but by other, less qualifiable means. Cross-cultural and cross-temporal comparisons with other court societies reveal this to be a truth.[204] Ctesias does not create his royal women as literary 'types'; he records the actions of real court women, and in this he is consistent with other court historians of the period. The Davidic Court History's depiction of Bathsheba, the favoured wife of David and mother of Solomon, shows her to be a powerful guardian of the throne, in much the same way as the Assyrian Royal Annals record how the Queen Mother, Naqia, held the reins of power

201 See further Llewellyn-Jones 2002. See also Tougher 2008.

202 For Achaemenid royal women and the maintenance of dynastic order, see Brosius 1996.

203 Llewellyn-Jones 2002. See also important comments on the nature of the historiography on Persian women by Harrison 2008, 59. See, however, Lenfant 2009, 93–95, who is inclined to follow Sancisi-Weerdenburg (1983) in seeing Ctesias (followed by Dinon) as the perpetrator of the myth of the beautiful, debauched Persian princess.

204 See, for example, Morris 1979; Elias 1983; Wan 1988; Anderson 1990; Holdworth and Courtauld 1995; Rawski 1998; McDermott 1999; Zega 2002; Nelso 2003.

as her grandson Assurbanipal ascended the throne.[205] These powerful women, dynastic guard dogs as it were, do not dominate men in order to destroy them; they work within the confines of the court system. These are not wild, uncontrolled women; these are domestic women, albeit of the household of the monarch, whose bloodline they vigilantly protect.[206]

Ctesias did not invent the 'Orient' as a negative construct; during his years in Persia he observed, asked questions, listened, recorded, and transmitted the rich mixture of authentic Persian stories of kings and dynasties in this unique melange of history, gossip, fantasy, and (tragic) poetry. In the process of recording he reacted to his sources in a manner typical of other Greek writers of *Persica* for, as James Davidson points out:

> the Greeks did not invent things, but were quite happy to misunderstand, modify, or simply decontextualize some salient Persian facts, images, and representations, for, of course, it was the grains of truth that gave negative constructions their cogency.[207]

This is a far way off from imagining Ctesias as the perpetrator of a harmful form of Saidian Orientalism.[208]

Said's *Orientalism* begins with Karl Marx: 'They cannot represent themselves; they must be represented'. Said used this ideology as the springboard to launch his attack on the Western creation of an imagined East. But what has this to do with Ctesias? He, a Greek,

205 de Vaux 1961; Bailey 1990; Melville 1999; Novotny 2001; Marsman 2003; Solvang 2003; Dodson and Hilton 2005. It is worth noting, however, that Queen Atossa and Queen Artystone, the daughters of Cyrus II, and the wives of Darius I do not figure in the *Persica* at all, although they are mentioned in Herodotus, 3.88, 7.69, 7.72. See Brosius 1996, 41–63. Atossa also appears (unnamed) as the Queen in Aeschylus' *Persians*.

206 Brosius 1996.

207 Davidson 2006, 35.

208 In his seminal 1979 work, *Le Structure de sérail* (published in its 1998 English translation as *The Sultan's Court*), Alain Grosrichard focuses his attention, unlike Said, on the dominance of fiction – romantic fiction included – in the western representation of the East. His exploration of the creation of the despotic court as the fantasmic Other in European fiction, with its focus on the sexual-political fantasy of 'Oriental Despotism' and the mechanisms of absolute power is more in keeping with the stereotypes propagated and reiterated in Greek literature than the model proposed by Said. See Llewellyn-Jones, forthcoming 2010.

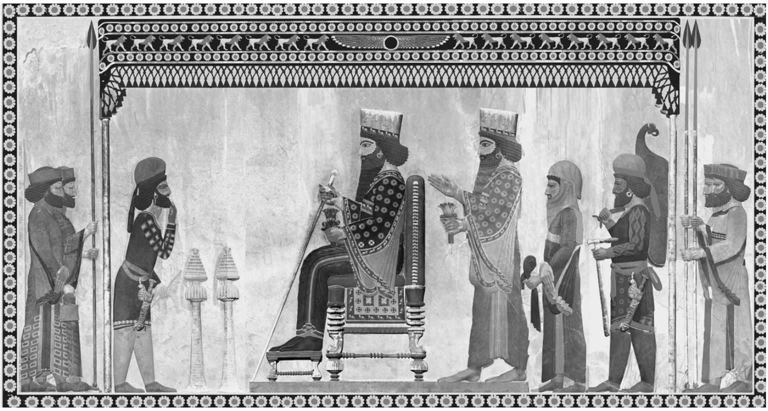


Figure 8 This sculpted and painted scene of an enthroned Great King and his Crown Prince is one of a pair originally situated at the two façades of the Apadana at Persepolis. The scene depicts a royal audience and is rich in its detailed depiction of court dress and ceremony. The two sculpted reliefs were later moved from the Apadana to the Treasury where one still resides. The other, better preserved, scene is in Tehran. Digitally restored version of the Treasury Relief at Persepolis courtesy of Persepolis 3D.com.

took Persian self-representation into the Greek-speaking world. A new, enlightened reading of Ctesias is possible, given that the fragments of the real, Persian, world that Ctesias knew are available for our scrutiny too. As Varisco has suggested, the ghosts of the Orientalist past can probably never be laid totally to rest, but we need not be frightened out of our critical scholarship by this problematic spectre.[209]

Lloyd Llewellyn-Jones

209 See Varisco 2007, 303.

OUTLINE OF THE *HISTORY OF PERSIA*

Note: Where known, dates are given for major historical events.

BOOKS 1–3: ASSYRIAN HISTORY

Ninus, King of Assyria, founds the Assyrian Empire by invading most of Asia; foundation of Ninus (Nineveh); Semiramis' early years and eventual marriage to Ninus; death of Ninus; Semiramis' building programme; Semiramis founds Babylon and builds various monuments across the Empire; Semiramis' military exploits, including her invasion of India; Ninyas usurps the throne; death of Semiramis; reign of Ninyas; reign of Sardanapallus (30 generations later); revolt of Arbaces the Mede and Belesys the Babylonian; siege of Ninus (Nineveh); capture of Nineveh and end of the Assyrian Empire.

BOOKS 4–6: MEDIAN HISTORY

Reign of Arbaces (28 years); reign of Maudaces (50 years); reign of Sosarmus (30 years); reign of Artycas (50 years); reign of Arbianus (22 years); reign of Artaeus (40 years); revolt of Parsondes and the war between the Medes and the Cadusians; reign of Artyntes (22 years), reign of Astibaras (40 years); revolt of the Parthians; Zarinaea, Queen of the Saces; reign of Astyages (Astyïgas).

BOOKS 7–11: PERSIAN HISTORY: REIGN OF CYRUS II (CYRUS THE GREAT) (550/49–530 BCE)

Cyrus' early years; Cyrus plots against Astyages (Astyïgas) with Oebaras and leads the Persians and Cadusians in revolt; Cyrus defeats Astyages and is crowned king; Cyrus marries Amytis; Cyrus' war against and

capture of King Croesus of Lydia (548/7 BCE); The eunuch Petisacas and the death and burial of Astyages; Amytis' revenge on Petisacas; Cyrus' campaign against the Derbices; death of Cyrus.

BOOKS 12–13:[1] PERSIAN HISTORY: REIGNS OF CAMBYSES II (530–522 BCE), THE MAGUS (522 BCE), DARIUS I (522–486 BCE), AND XERXES I (486–465 BCE)

Burial of Cyrus; Cambyses conquers Egypt at the instigation of his wife, Neitetis; the Magus Sphandadates accuses Cambyses' brother Tanyoxarces of plotting against the king; Queen Amytis' suspicions about the Magus; Tanyoxarkes is killed and the Magus takes his place in disguise; Amytis learns the truth and kills herself; death of Cambyses; the Magus' accession to the throne; plot of the seven Persian nobleman to kill the Magus; Darius becomes king; death of Darius' parents; Darius' Scythian campaigns (*c.* 513 BCE); invasion of Greece and defeat at Marathon (490 BCE); death of Darius; Xerxes' accession to the throne; Xerxes' forces attack Greece; Battle of Thermopylae; Battle of Plataea (479 BCE); sack of the Athens; Battle of Salamis (480 BCE); return of Xerxes to Asia; murder of Xerxes; wrongful execution of Crown Prince Darius.

BOOKS 16–17: PERSIAN HISTORY: REIGN OF ARTAXERXES I (465–424 BCE)

Beginning of the reign of Artaxerxes; death of Artapanus and the revolt of Persians loyal to him; revolt in Egypt led by Inarus (464–454 BCE) and his eventual execution at Amestris' instigation; revolt of Megabyzus: his pardon, exile and return home disguised as a leper; Amytis' sexual abuse by the Greek doctor Apollonides of Cos; death of Amestris and Artaxerxes.

BOOK 18: PERSIAN HISTORY: REIGNS OF XERXES II (424 BCE), SECYNDIANUS (424 BCE), AND DARIUS II (OCHUS) (424–404 BCE)

Forty-five-day reign of Reign of Xerxes II (424 BCE); Secyndianus' plot and murder of Xerxes II; six-month reign of Secyndianus; revolt of Ochus who then rules as Darius II; unsuccessful revolt of Darius'

1 Photius' numbering of the books creates a gap between Books 13 and 16.

brother Arsites and Megabyzus' son Artyphius; Parysatis persuades Darius to kill Aristes; revolt of Pisuthnes; unsuccessful conspiracy of the eunuch Artoxares; marriage of Arsicas (later Artaxerxes II) to Stateira and of Amistris to Terituchmes; Terituchmes' passion for princess Rhoxane and his failed plan to kill his wife, Amistris; execution of Terituchmes and his family by Parysatis and murder of Rhoxane; Parysatis spares Stateira's life.

BOOKS 19–20: PERSIAN HISTORY: EARLY REIGN OF ARTAXERXES II (404–359/8 BCE)

Death of Darius II in Babylon; reign of Artaxerxes II (Arsicas); revolt of Cyrus the Younger; Battle at Cunaxa (401 BCE) and death of Cyrus and mutilation of his body; departure of the Greek mercenaries; Parysatis wins Bagapates from the King in a game of dice and has him crucified; Artaxerxes gives presents to men who aided him at Cunaxa; Parysatis executes Mitradates.

BOOKS 21–23: PERSIAN HISTORY: LATER REIGN OF ARTAXERXES II (404–359/8 BCE); LIST OF DISTANCES; LIST OF KINGS

Tissaphernes plots against the Greek generals; Ctesias helps Clearchus when he is in prison; Clearchus' death; Parysatis' poisoning of Stateira and her exile; Ctesias' role as negotiator and his return to Cnidus (398/7 BCE?); list of distances between Ephesus and Bactria; list of kings from Ninus and Semiramis to Artaxerxes II.

CTESIAS'
HISTORY OF PERSIA

TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

Different translation styles are appropriate to different kinds of work. For the purposes of this book, my primary concern has been to deliver a version of the testimonia and fragments of Ctesias that tends towards the literal rather than the literary: this way, readers get as close access as possible to the sources from which our picture of Ctesias' work is built up. As outlined in the Introduction, few of the sentences translated here come directly from Ctesias' *Persica*: rather, the passages tend to be summaries of his work, retellings of his stories, or judgements on his literary style and historical methods. Since, then, the bulk of the material is already once removed from Ctesias' original work, it seems right to represent the words of the ancient authors as closely as possible – especially given that readers will find it difficult to find alternative translations of many of the sources here.

The downside of close translation, of course, is that a certain amount of fluency is inevitably sacrificed and, without the option of 'improving' on the Greek, the perfunctoriness of some authors' writing is more than apparent. One upside, though, is that variations in the styles of different authors do, I think, emerge – and fortunately the flair and sheer readability of many of the writers *do* shine through.

Within the translation, names are generally Latinized (the exception being where a name or work is far better known in its Hellenized form): thus Arbaces (not Arbakes), Tanyoxarces (not Tanuoxarkes), etc. Where there are Persian words, these are generally given in italics and glossed if necessary. On occasion, footnotes are provided on the translation of individual words.

James Robson

KEY TO THE CONVENTIONS USED IN THIS EDITION

The following are translations of the passages collected by D. Lenfant in *Ctésias de Cnide* (Paris, 2004). In her edition, Lenfant follows the numbering of F. Jacoby, *Fragmente der Griechischen Historiker* (Leiden, 1958), although the text cited by Lenfant is sometimes more protracted than that found in Jacoby. Lenfant's numbering of the testimonia and fragments has been maintained throughout this edition:

Testimonia are given reference numbers beginning with **T**.

Fragments are given reference numbers beginning with **F**.

In the numbered headings:

[**L**] indicates a fragment, which figures in Lenfant but not Jacoby

* after the number of a fragment indicates that its attribution to Ctesias is conjectural.

[**cf. Fragment X**] indicates that the passage is repeated, either in full or in part, in Fragment X. Some passages appear as both testimonia *and* fragments.

The text also contains *subheadings* in bold italics: these are additions of the authors and have been added for ease of reference and to give structure to the fragments.

Within the passages, material which is either dubious or has been added by the translator is included within square brackets [ ]. Note, too, that passages originally written in verse are laid out as poetry (although no attempt has been made to reproduce the rhythms of the originals).

Anyone wishing to consult the text in more detail is referred to Lenfant's edition, which contains the passages translated here in their

original languages (along with an apparatus criticus), as well as a French translation, introduction, and notes.

The original language of the passages translated is Greek unless otherwise stated.

TESTIMONIA ON THE LIFE AND WORK OF CTESIAS

T1. Suda, s.v. Κτησίας

Ctesias, son of Ctesiarchus or Ctesiochus, from Cnidus, doctor, who attended Artaxerxes – called Mnemnon – and wrote a *History of Persia* in 23 books.[1]

T1b. Tzetzes, *Chiliades*, 1.85–89 {=82–86 Kiessling} {L}

Ctesias, the doctor, son of Ctesiochus,
Having left the city of Cnidus on Cyprus,[2]
While fighting alongside Cyrus, was seized by Artaxerxes,
And lived among the Persians for 17 years,
And wrote a *History of Persia* in 23 books . . .

T2. Strabo, *Geography*, 14.2.15

Noteworthy men of Cnidus . . . from there came Ctesias who attended Artaxerxes and wrote the *History of Assyria* and the *History of Persia*.

T3. Diodorus, *Historical Library*, 2.32.4 {cf. Fragment 5}

Ctesias of Cnidus was around at the time of Cyrus' expedition against his brother Artaxerxes, was taken prisoner and, having been taken

1 To avoid confusion, the spelling of Artaxerxes' name has been standardized in this translation: note, however, that Plutarch, Photius, and Lucian all favour the spelling Artoxerxes.
2 This is clearly a mistake: Cyprus is possibly a misreading of Caria.

into service by the King because of his medical knowledge, enjoyed his esteem for a full 17 years. And so he says that it was from the royal parchments in which the Persians kept their ancient deeds, laid out according to a law, that he inquired closely into each and every detail and, after compiling his history, published it for the Greeks.

T3b. Photius, *Library*, 72 p. 45b {L}

And {he talks} about the iron in the bottom of the well. Ctesias even says he had owned two swords made out of this iron: one which he received from the King, the other from the King's mother, Parysatis.

T4. Galen, *On Hippocrates'* Book On Joints (de articulis), 4.40

Ctesias of Cnidus, a relation of his {Hippocrates'} – for he too was of the family of Asclepiades . . .

T5a. Eusebius, *Chronicle* {original language: Latin}

Olympiad 95.1: Xenophon, son of Gryllus, and Ctesias are considered famous.

T5b. Photius, *Library*, 72, p. 36a6–8

He was at his height in the time of Cyrus, son of Darius and Parysatis, who was the brother of Artaxerxes, and who inherited the Persian throne.

T6a. Plutarch, *Artaxerxes*, 11.3 {cf. Fragment 20}

Those around him were in uproar and took to flight, but {the King} got up and along with a few others – Ctesias among them – occupied a nearby hill and laid low.[3]

3 The context is the Battle of Cunaxa, fought in 401 BCE, which saw the death of Cyrus the younger. See Introduction, pp. 11–12.

T6aβ. Xenophon, *Anabasis*, 1.8.26–27 {cf. Fragment 21} {L}

26 . . . Ctesias the doctor also says that he treated the wound himself.
27 . . . Ctesias relates how many men in the King's entourage died; for he was with him.

T6aγ. Plutarch, *Artaxerxes*, 13.4 {cf. Fragment 22} {L}

As for the number of corpses, Ctesias says that the figure of 9,000 was reported to Artaxerxes; but it seemed to him that the dead numbered at least 20,000.

T6b. Plutarch, *Artaxerxes*, 14.1 {cf. Fragment 26}

After the battle . . . [the King] rewarded Ctesias and the others well.

T7a. Photius, *Library*, 72 p. 44a 31–34 {cf. Fragment 27 §69}

. . . Ctesias [says that], because he was Parysatis' doctor,[4] he was able to offer Clearchus, with *her* help, a lot in the way of treatment and comfort when he was in prison.[5]

T7aβ Plutarch, *Artaxerxes*, 18.1–4 {cf. Fragment 28} {L}

1 After Tissaphernes had utterly deceived Clearchus and the other generals, acting contrary to the oaths he had sworn, and had seized

4 Parysatis was daughter of Artaxerxes I and wife of Darius II (her half-brother), and thus Queen from 424–404 BCE. She was subsequently Queen-Mother to Artaxerxes II – although her favourite son was Cyrus the Younger. See pp. 9–10.

5 Clearchus was a Spartan officer who held various commands at Byzantium (including making himself tyrant there in 403 BCE). He subsequently led a contingent of Greek mercenaries who fought on behalf of Cyrus the Younger in his attempt to win the Persian throne from Artaxerxes II. After Cyrus' death at the Battle of Cunaxa, Clearchus was arrested and eventually executed. See p. 16.

them and sent them up to the King bound in shackles, Ctesias says that Clearchus asked him to supply him with a comb.[6]

2 And he says that after receiving it and tending to his hair he was so delighted with the service Ctesias had rendered him that he gave him a ring to wear as a symbol of friendship to his relations and household in Sparta. The seal on the ring showed Caryatids dancing.[7]

3 The supplies that were sent to Clearchus were taken and consumed by the shackled soldiers who gave little of them to Clearchus. Ctesias says that he righted this situation by arranging for more supplies to be sent to Clearchus and for further supplies to be given to the soldiers separately. He says that he performed these services and provided these supplies with the approval and understanding of Parysatis.

4 As there was a leg of ham amongst the supplies sent to him each day, Clearchus made appeals to Ctesias, instructing him to send him a small knife by hiding it inside the meat and not to allow his fate to depend on the King's cruelty. But Ctesias was unwilling to comply through fear.

T7b. Plutarch, *Artaxerxes*, 13.5–7 {cf. Testimonium 15 and Fragment 23}

5 It is a manifest lie on the part of Ctesias to say that he was sent to the Greeks with Phallynus the Zacynthian and some others.

6 Xenophon knew that Ctesias had spent time with the King: for he mentions him and has clearly read his works. And so if Ctesias had gone along as an interpreter of conversations as important as these, he would not have failed to mention his name – whereas he *does* name Phallynus the Zacythian.

7 But unfortunately it seems that Ctesias is self-promoting and no less partial towards Sparta and Clearchus: he always gives himself plenty of space in his narrative, which he uses to mention Clearchus' and Sparta's many fine characteristics.

6 Tissaphernes was Satrap of Sardis when, in the late fifth century (*c.*413 BCE), he entered into an alliance with Sparta against Athens during the Peloponnesian War. His influence in Asia Minor diminished with the arrival of Cyrus the Younger on whom he had his revenge by warning Artaxerxes II of his brother's ambitions to take the throne (401 BCE). After the Battle of Cunaxa his treachery led to the murder of the Greek generals who had fought on the side of Cyrus the Younger. See pp. 9–12.

7 Caryatid is the name given to a sculpted draped female figure, usually used as an architectural support. The name derives from the Laconian town of Caryae, where virgins danced in honour of Artemis Caryatis.

T7c. Photius, *Library*, 72 p. 44b 20–42 [cf. Fragment 30]

72 [Ctesias writes about] the reasons why King Artaxerxes was in dispute with Evagoras, the King of Salamis. And Evagoras' messengers to Ctesias in order to recover the letters from Abulites. And Ctesias' letter to him about reconciling with Anaxagoras, the Cypriot King. The arrival in Cyprus of the messengers from Evagoras and the return to Evagoras of Ctesias' letters.

73 And Conon's speech to Evagoras about going to the King; and Evagoras' letter about the things that he had requested.[8] And Conon's letter to Ctesias. And the tribute paid to the King by Evagoras. And the return of the letters to Ctesias. Ctesias' speech to the King about Conon and the letter sent to him. The return to Satibarnazes of the gifts from Evagoras and the arrival of the messengers who had been sent to Cyprus. And Conon's letter to the King and Ctesias.

74 And how the messengers from Sparta who had been sent to the King were placed under observation.[9] The King's letters to Conon and the Spartans, which Ctesias took himself. How Conon was made admiral by Pharnabazus.

75 Ctesias' arrival in his homeland, Cnidus, and in Sparta. And the trial in Rhodes of the Spartan messengers and their acquittal.

T7d. Plutarch, *Artaxerxes*, 21.2–4 [cf. Fragment 32]

2 . . . [Conon] sent a letter to the King about what he was planning.

3 And he ordered the man carrying it to deliver it through the intermediary of Zeno of Crete or Polycritus the Mendaean (Zeno was a dancer and Polycritus a doctor) – but if these men were not there, through the intermediary of Ctesias, the doctor.

4 Ctesias is said to have taken the letter and to have added to Conon's orders a request to send him Ctesias as well, on the grounds that he would be useful when it came to naval actions. But Ctesias says that the King himself bestowed this duty on him of his own accord.

8 Conon was the Athenian general in charge of the fleet at the decisive Battle of Aegospotami (405 BCE), which effectively sealed Sparta's victory in the Peloponessian War. He subsequently went into self-imposed exile and acted as a Persian fleet-commander in the 390s.

9 The Greek here (*etērēthēsan*) is ambiguous: it could alternatively mean that the messengers were put in prison or even that they were placed under protection.

T8. Photius, *Library*, 72 p. 35b35–36a6

A book of Ctesias of Cnidus was read, the *History of Persia* in 23 books. In the first six books Ctesias deals with Assyrian history and everything that came before Persian history.[10] From book seven, however, he gives a detailed account of Persian history and in books seven, eight, ten, eleven, twelve, and thirteen he describes the history of Cyrus, Cambyses, and the Magus, and Darius and Xerxes – and this is different from the *Histories* of Herodotus in almost every way and he exposes Herodotus as a liar in a number of matters and calls him a writer of fables: he is later than Herodotus. He says that he was an eyewitness of most of the things he recounts or that, when it was not possible for him to see, he made sure that he personally heard accounts from the Persians themselves and that this is how he wrote his history. It is not just Herodotus with whom he takes issue: he also disagrees with Xenophon, son of Gryllus, on several points.

T8b. Photius, *Library*, 72 p. 42b 11–13 {cf. Fragment 15 §51} [L]

And the historian says that he heard this from Parysatis herself.

T9. Diodorus, 14.46.6 {cf. Fragment 33b}

Ctesias the historian ended his account of the *History of Persia* in this year {i.e. 398/7 BCE}, having begun with Ninus and Semiramis.

T10. Photius, *Library*, 72 p. 45a 20–21

His *History of India* was read, in one book, which is written more in Ionic dialect.

T11a. Strabo, *Geography*, 11.6.2–3

2 . . . one does not have any reliable information about these people, and no account of the ancient history of the Persians, Medes, or Syrians is hugely trustworthy owing to the historians' naivety and penchant for fables.

10 Ctesias' account of Persian history proper begins with Cyrus' defeat of Astyages in 550/49 BCE. See p. 159.

3 For when they saw that men who were clearly fable-writers enjoyed great esteem, they thought that they too would make their writing pleasurable, if they included in the scheme of history things that they had never seen or heard themselves nor had learnt from anyone qualified, looking to this one consideration alone: that their work should be pleasant and awe-inspiring to listen to. One would more readily believe Hesiod and Homer with their heroic tales and the tragic poets than Ctesias, Herodotus, Hellanicus, and other such writers.

T11b. Strabo, *Geography*, 1.2.35

No one would reproach Hesiod for his ignorance when he talks of men who are half-man half-dog, men with oversized heads and Pygmies. And no one would reproach Homer himself when tells similarly fabulous stories – including tales about pygmies – nor Alcman when he talks of web-footed men, nor Aeschylus when he talks of dog-headed men, men who have eyes in their chests and men with a single eye, since we seldom remark when prose authors writing historical works recount fables without acknowledging it. For it seems plain enough that they weave in fables on purpose, not because they are ignorant of the facts, but because the invention of impossible details allows them to tell enjoyable and marvellous tales. But they *appear* to do it in ignorance because, for the most part, they tell these stories persuasively and their subject matter is obscure and unfamiliar. Theopompus acknowledges this practice when he says that he will also recount fables in his histories better than anything said by Herodotus, Ctesias, Hellanicus, and those who have written histories of India.

T11c. Antigonus of Carystus, *Collection of Miraculous Stories* (*Historiarum mirabilium collectio*), 15 [cf. Fragment 36]

And Ctesias relates that in Ecbatana and Persia there is something very similar to this.[11] But because he tells a lot of lies, we have omitted the extract. For it seemed far-fetched.[12]

11 The context is a story of crows in Crannon, Thessaly, which abandon their young as soon as they are hatched.

12 The word translated 'far-fetched' here (*teratōdēs*) can also mean 'full of marvels/portents'.

T11d. Plutarch, *Artaxerxes*, 1.4 {cf. Fragment 15a}

But even if Ctesias has injected all sorts of incredible, meandering stories into his books, it is hardly likely that he did not know the name of the king at whose court he lived and for whom he cared, along with his wife, mother, and children.

T11e. Plutarch, *Artaxerxes*, 6.9 {cf. Fragment 29a}

Although Dinon has stated that her plot {i.e. Parysatis' plot to kill Stateira} was carried out during the war, Ctesias says it was carried out later;[13] and it is hardly likely that Ctesias was ignorant of the timing since he was there when it happened, nor did he have any reason deliberately to relocate the event in his narrative from the time when it occurred. Despite the fact that his story often deviates from the truth and veers towards the legendary and dramatic, this event must occupy the place that he gave it.

T11f. Aristotle, *History of Animals* (*Historia animalium*), 8.28 p. 606a8[14]

In India, Ctesias tells us – although he is not trustworthy – there are neither wild nor domestic pigs, and such animals, as are bloodless or scaly are all large.

T11fβ. Aristotle, *History of Animals* (*Historia animalium*), 3.22 p. 523a26 {L}

What Ctesias has written about the procreation of elephants is also false.

T11fγ. Aristotle, *On the Generation of Animals*, 2.2 p. 736a2 {L}

As for what Ctesias of Cnidus has said about elephant sperm, he is clearly lying. For he says that it gets so dry and hard that it becomes like amber.

13 Stateira, the wife of Artaxerxes II, was poisoned by her mother-in-law, Parysatis: see F27 and F29. See also p. 16.

14 This and the following five testimonia probably refer to Ctesias' *Indica* (*History of India*) rather than the *Persica*. See pp. 32–35.

T11g. Arrian, *Anabasis of Alexander*, 5.4.2

Ctesias – if, indeed, anyone finds Ctesias reliable as evidence – says that where the Indus itself is narrowest the banks are 40 stades apart and where it is broadest, 100;[15] but for most of its course they are between these two extremes.

T11gβ. Arrian, *History of India*, 3.6 {L}

Ctesias of Cnidus says that India is equal in size to the rest of Asia, although he does talk nonsense . . .

T11gγ. Aelian, *On the Nature of Animals*, 4.21 {L}

Ctesias says that in Persia he saw this animal,[16] which had been brought from India as a gift for the Persian King – if indeed Ctesias' testimony constitutes sufficient proof in such matters. However, if anyone does hear talk of an animal with peculiar features like this, they should certainly pay attention to the historian from Cnidus.

T11h. Lucian, *True Histories*, 1.2–4

2 . . . each part of the narrative hints – not without an element of ridicule – at certain ancient poets, historians, and philosophers who have written a lot of portentous and fabulous things: and I would also name them personally if they were not, in all likelihood, obvious enough for you to recognize yourself.

3 Amongst these is Ctesias of Cnidus, son of Ctesiochus, who wrote about the Indians' country as well as about things which are found there but which he had neither seen himself nor heard from anyone truthful. Iambulus also wrote many incredible stories about things found in the Great Sea, forging what to everyone was obviously a fiction whilst nevertheless composing a story which was not altogether unpleasing. And many others who have come to the same decisions as these writers have written about their wanderings and travels abroad, with stories about the huge size of wild animals, the primitiveness of certain tribes and their strange ways of living. Their ancestor

15 A stade is equivalent 600 feet (notwithstanding the fact that the standard measurement of a foot varied slightly from place to place: see note 26). Thus a stade is approximately 180 metres.

16 That is, a mantichor: a mythical Indian beast with human face, a lion's body and a scorpion's tale.

and teacher in all this buffoonery is Homer's Odysseus, who told Alcinous and his companions about the enslavement of the winds and the one-eyed, savage men who ate raw flesh and also about animals with many heads and the changes undergone by his companions when they were drugged – in addition to which he told many marvellous stories to the unassuming Phaeacians.[17]

4 (. . .) So then, I write about things which I have neither seen nor experienced nor learnt from anyone else – even about things that neither exist nor could ever come into existence in the first place. This is why readers of my works should not put any faith in them whatsoever.

T11hβ. Lucian, *True Histories*, 2.31 {L}

And the greatest punishments of all were endured by those who had ever in their lives told lies and historians who had not told the truth, amongst whom were Ctesias of Cnidus, Herodotus, and many others.

T11hγ. Lucian, *Lover of Lies* (*Philopseudes*), 2 {L}

. . . I could point you to many otherwise intelligent men with admirable minds who – I don't know how – are overcome by this disease and are lovers of lies, so much so that I am distressed that such men, who are excellent in every respect, nevertheless enjoy deceiving both themselves and their readers. For you ought to know that these ancient men before me – Herodotus and Ctesias of Cnidus and, before these, the poets and Homer himself, men celebrated in song – have made use of the written lie not only to deceive those who were listening to them at the time, but also to have the lie handed down as far as us, preserved in the finest words and meters. At any rate, it often happens that they fill me with shame whenever they describe the castration of Uranus, the binding of Prometheus, the revolt of the Giants, and the whole tragedy in Hades, and how, out of love, Zeus became a bull or a swan and how some woman or other turned into a bird or a bear, and even when they describe the Pegasuses, Chimeras, Gorgons, Cyclopes, and all the things of that sort: very strange and portentous little stories capable of beguiling the souls of children who are still afraid of Mormo and Lamia.[18]

17 Odysseus relates his fantastic tales to the Phaeacians in Books 9–12 of the *Odyssey*.

18 Mormo is an evil spirit said to terrorize wicked children; Lamia was a child-devouring monster.

T11hδ. Lucian, *How to Write History*, 39 [L]

The one task of the historian is to relate how things happened: he [Ctesias] would not be able to do this inasmuch as he was either afraid of Artaxerxes (whose doctor he was) or because he hoped to receive a purple kaftan and a Nisaean horse as payment for praising him in his writing.

T11i. Aeneas of Gaza, *Theophrastus*, 84–85 [L]

For neither does Ctesias, who recounts a lot of legends about the Indians, tell this story anywhere, nor does Arrian . . .

T11j. Tzetzes, *Chiliades*, 9, hist. 275, v.571–585 [=Kiessling 578–592] [L]

To Tzetzes

Ctesias appears to write more truthfully than other historians –
At least as far as what he wrote about Babylon is concerned.
For he describes the whole of Babylon's perimeter
As measuring three hundred and sixty stades.
But others exaggerate this more and more.
At any rate, a man who is conservative about the length of the perimeter
Would not have overestimated [the city's] height unnecessarily.
At least, it is possible that when Ctesias saw this
The height of the towers was sixty fathoms[19]
And the height of the walls at that time was fifty fathoms.
Perhaps they were brought down by wars and earthquakes,
And Cleitarchus and all those accompanying Alexander
Would have seen them later, their height in fathoms so diminished
That they were reduced to being measured only in cubits.[20]

19 An ancient Greek fathom was equivalent to 1.85 metres (just over 6 feet), so 60 fathoms is 111 metres (122 yards).

20 A cubit is the distance between the elbow and the end of the fingers: the Greek cubit seems to have measured around 47 cm (18.5 inches). For further descriptions of Babylon, see F1b.

T12. Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *On Literary Composition*, 10.4–5

4 To be sure, the writing [*lexis*] of both Thucydides and of Antiphon of Rhamnus displays as beautiful composition as any, by Zeus, and no one could find fault with their writing from this point of view, but nevertheless they are not altogether pleasurable. The work of both the historian from Cnidus, Ctesias, and the Socratic Xenophon contains writing that is as pleasurable as possible, but it is nevertheless not composed as beautifully as it could be. I am talking generally, and not absolutely, since in the work of the former writers the arrangement of passages can be pleasurable and in the work of the latter it can be beautiful.
5 Herodotus' composition [*synthesis*] displays both these qualities: it is both pleasurable and beautiful.

T13. Photius, *Library*, 72, p. 45a 5–19

This historian is both very clear and simple. For this reason his writing is enjoyable. He uses Ionian dialect, although not always, like Herodotus, but for quite a number of terms nonetheless. And he does not take his narrative off into inappropriate digressions like Herodotus. As for fables – for which he rebukes Herodotus – he does not refrain from these himself, and they are especially prevalent in his writings in the *History of India*. The pleasure of his history comes mainly in the way he elaborates his tales with a lot of pathos and surprising twists and in the way it is adorned with so much variety in a way similar to fables. His expression is somewhat more relaxed than it need be, tending towards the colloquial. But the writing of Herodotus, because of both this quality and also because of the power of the expression and artistry, is a model of Ionian style [*dialektos*].

T14a. Demetrius, *On Style,* §209–216 [cf. Fragments 8a and 24]

209 First, [let's talk] about vividness [*enargeia*]. Vividness stems primarily from clarity of expression and from neither excising nor leaving anything out. For example: 'As when a man draws water off into a channel' and the rest of this simile.[21] For it displays vividness in the way that it suits the situation completely and leaves nothing out.

21 Homer, *Iliad* 21.257–262.

210 Likewise the horse race in honour of Patroclus, in which he [Homer] says, 'The broad shoulders of Eumelus with their wind' and 'they seemed constantly to be just about to set foot on the chariot'.[22] All this is vivid in the way that it leaves out no part of what is happening or what has happened.

211 For this reason repetition often displays vividness, too, more than saying something just once, as in this example: 'you also spoke ill of him while he was alive, and now he is dead you write ill of him.'[23] For the presence of 'ill' twice signals the slander more vividly.

212 As for the fact that they reproach Ctesias for being too garrulous because of his repetitions, perhaps this reproach is often justified, but often they do not appreciate this man's vividness. For, when an action is repeated, using the same word twice lends greater emphasis.

213 For example, the following: A certain Stryangaeus, a Median man, struck a Sacian woman off her horse – for the women in Sacia fight like Amazons – and when he saw that the Sacian woman was young and good-looking he let her get away unharmed. Afterwards, when a peace treaty had been made, he was in love with this woman but failed to woo her. He resolved to starve himself to death; but first he wrote a letter to the woman, reproaching her as follows: 'I saved you and you were saved by me, and I am ruined because of you.'

214 At this point someone who valued concise expression might take issue, saying that 'I saved' and 'you were saved by me' amounted to a worthless repetition. For both expressions mean the same thing. But if you took one of these away, you would also take away both the vividness and the pathos which results from this vividness. And the verb that follows, 'I am ruined instead of 'I am being ruined', is more vivid owing to the use of the past tense. For an event which has already happened is more impressive than an event which is about to happen or which is still happening.

215 In short, this poet (for it would be reasonable to call him a poet) is a master of vividness throughout his work.

216 Here is another example of this. One should not relate events all at once but gradually, keeping the listener in suspense and forcing them to share in the anxiety. This is what Ctesias does in the announcement of Cyrus' death. For the messenger comes but does not tell Parysatis straightaway that Cyrus has died – this is what is called a 'Scythian discourse' – rather, he first announced that he was winning and she was pleased and worried. Afterwards she asks,

22 Homer, *Iliad* 23.379.
23 Author and context unknown.

'How is the King faring?' And he says that he has taken flight. And she retorts, 'Yes, it is Tissaphernes who is responsible for what has happened to him.' And she asks again, 'Where is Cyrus now?' And the messenger replies, 'In the place where brave men have to camp.' Continuing with difficulty, gradually and bit by bit, he finally blurted it out, as they say – thus showing very expressively and vividly that the messenger was reporting the disaster against his will and throwing both his mother and the listener into anguish.

T14b. Plutarch, *Artaxerxes*, 11.11 {cf. Fragment 20}

Such is the story of Ctesias, in which he does kill the man, but takes his time killing him, as if with a blunt sword.

T15. Plutarch, *Artaxerxes*, 13.6 {cf. Testimonium 7b and Fragment 23}

For Xenophon knew that Ctesias spent time with the King: he mentions him and has clearly read his books.

T15b. Plutarch, *Artaxerxes*, 18.6–7 {cf. Fragment 28} {L}

6 [Ctesias says that] after this Parysatis plotted against Stateira and prepared for her to be poisoned.[24] But what he says is not likely, and the motive is not very well thought through, if he is claiming that Parysatis performed such a wicked act and ran such risks because of Clearchus, even daring to kill the King's legitimate wife, who was his partner in rearing children to inherit the throne.

7 Rather, it is clear that he exaggerates Clearchus' renown, turning the episode into a tragic drama. For he says that after the other generals had been put to death, they were torn to pieces by dogs and birds, but that a whirlwind brought a large pile of earth and heaped it in a mound covering Clearchus' body.

T16. Suda, s.v. **Παμφίλη** (139)

Pamphile, from Epidaurus, learned, daughter of Soteridas, whose works they are also said to be, as Dionysius states in Book 30 of his

24 See note 13 above.

History of Music [*Mousikē*]. Others write that they are by her husband, Socratidas. *Historical Notes* in thirty-three books, *Summary of Ctesias* in three books, a large number of summaries of histories and other works, *On Controversies*, *On Sexual Pleasures*, and many others.

T17. Eusebius, *Preparation for the Gospel*, 10.3.23

There are two [books] by Lysimachus, *On the Plagiarism of Ephorus*. Alcaeus, the author of abusive iambics and epigrams, condemned Ephorus' acts of plagiarism by parodying them; there is a letter by Pollion to Soteridas *On the Plagiarism of Ctesias*, and by the same author a book *On the Plagiarism of Herodotus*.

T18. Pliny, *Natural History* [original language: Latin]

a) 1.2: Marvels combining fire and water . . . Which places are always burning . . . Taken from foreign . . . authors: . . . Ctesias . . .
b) 1.7: People's strange appearances . . . Discoveries in life . . . Taken from foreign . . . authors: . . . Ctesias . . .
c) 1.8: On mantichors[25] . . . Taken from foreign . . . authors: . . . Ctesias
d) 1.31: Marvels concerning water . . . Taken from foreign . . . authors: . . . Ctesias
e) 1.37: Concerning amber . . . Taken from foreign . . . authors: . . . Ctesias . . .

T19. Aulus Gellius, *Attic Nights*, 9.4 [original language: Latin]

1 When we were returning to Italy from Greece, sailing to Brindisium, we had disembarked the ship onto dry land and were walking around in that celebrated port (. . .), we saw bundles of books laid out for sale.
2 And I eagerly made for the books straightaway.
3 But these were all Greek books full of wonders and fables, unheard of and unbelievable things, ancient writers of no small reputation: Aristeas of Proconnesus, Isogonus of Nicaea, Ctesias, Onesicritus, Philostephanus, and Hegesias.

25 See note 16 above.

4 However, the papyrus rolls themselves were dirty from long neglect and were in a foul condition to look at.
5 I approached them all the same, found out their prices and, enticed by their amazing and unexpected cheapness, bought a large number of books for very little money and hastily read them all during the course of the two following nights. And while reading I plucked off certain bits and pieces from here and there, wrote down some extraordinary things which hardly any of *our* writers have ever tried and sprinkled them in these jottings so that whoever comes to read them will not find them altogether rough and *anēkoos* (ignorant) when he hears about the work of these other writers.
6 And so in those books were written things of the following type: (. . .)
9 Likewise that there are in the mountains of India dog-headed men who bark and feed on the birds and wild animals that they hunt; and likewise that there are other marvels in the lands of the Far East, men called Monocoli [Single-legged], who run with outstanding nimbleness by hopping on their single leg; and that there are even men who have no necks and eyes in their shoulders. (. . .)
11. Pygmies are also born not far from these men [i.e. a tribe on the borders of India], the tallest of whom are no taller than two-and-a-quarter feet.[26]

T20. Galen, *Commentaries on Book 6 of Hippocrates'* Epidemics, 3.13 (Kuhn XVIIB, 33 = CMG V 10, 2, 2 p. 141 1. 1)

It is difficult to find out which people he says are 'scurfy' – unless, that is, one reads the books of the ancient doctors not merely as history in the same way as one reads the works of Herodotus and Ctesias, but in order to gain more knowledge of the practices of the art.

26 The foot was measured differently in different parts of the Greek world: for example, the Attic foot measured around 29.6 cm (11.6 inches) and the Olympian foot 32 cm (12.6 inches). Two-and-a-quarter feet is therefore somewhere around 70 cm (28 inches).

FRAGMENTS OF CTESIAS' *HISTORY OF PERSIA*

BOOKS 1–3
ASSYRIAN HISTORY

THE RISE OF ASSYRIA: NINUS AND SEMIRAMIS

F1a. Eusebius, *Chronography*, p. 28, 28–29, 3 Karst {original language: Armenian}[27]

Cephalion the Historian's {account} of the Assyrian kingdom.

'I begin to write about subjects which others have also mentioned: first Hellanicus of Lesbos and Ctesias of Cnidus and then Herodotus of Hallicarnassus. In the first instance, the Assyrians ruled over the Asians; amongst these Assyrians were Ninus, son of Belus, during whose rule many things including hugely significant feats were accomplished.'

After that he also gave an account of the family of Šamiram {i.e. Semiramis};[28] and of Zaravyšt the Magus and his war against the Bactrian King and defeat by Šamiram; and of the years of the kingship of Ninus, which lasted 52 years, and of its end.

F1b. Diodorus, 2.1.4–28.7

THE GROWTH OF ASSYRIA UNDER NINUS: BABYLONIA, ARMENIA, MEDIA AND THE REST OF ASIA

1.4 So then, in ancient times there were native kings in Asia, no noteworthy deed or name of whom is recorded. The first of these recalled in history is Ninus, the King of the Assyrians, who

27 Eusebius' *Chronography* is almost entirely lost, though survives in part in an Armenian translation. Passages F1a, F1g, and F1oα all derive from a German translation of this text.

28 On Semiramis, see note 31 and pp. 71, 76.

accomplished great deeds: we shall try to write about him in detail. For, because he was warlike by nature and eager to achieve excellence, he armed the strongest of his young men and, by training them for a long time, made them accustomed to all kinds of suffering and the dangers of war.

5 And so he assembled an impressive army and made an alliance with King Ariaeus of Arabia, which at that time seemed to have been teeming with brave men. (. . .)

7 And so Ninus, King of the Assyrians, took the ruler of the Arabians with him and, with a great force, launched a campaign against the Babylonians who lived in a neighbouring land (at that time present-day Babylon had not been founded, but there were other noteworthy cities in Babylonia). And he subdued the natives easily because of their lack of experience of the dangers of war, then ordered them to pay fixed tributes each year and took the King of the conquered people prisoner along with his children and killed him.

8 Afterwards he invaded Armenia with large forces and terrified the natives by destroying some of the cities. Because of this their King, Barzanes, seeing that he stood no chance in battle, went to meet Ninus with many gifts and said that he would do whatever he was ordered.

9 And Ninus treated him magnanimously, allowing him to rule Armenia, agreeing that, as a friend, he should send a contingent and equipment for their army. And in order to increase his power even more he launched a campaign against Media.

10 Pharnus, the King of Media, opposed him in battle with an impressive force and was defeated, losing most of his soldiers; he was himself taken prisoner along with his wife and seven of his children and was crucified.

2.1 And while things were going so well for Ninus, he conceived a strong desire to subdue the whole of Asia between the Tanaïs and the Nile.[29] (. . .) He therefore appointed one of his friends as satrap of Media, while he himself attacked the tribes in Asia in an effort to subdue them. And in the 17 years he spent there he became master of them all, except the Indians and the Bactrians.

2 None of the historians recorded each and every battle or the number of all the people he subdued, but we shall try to run quickly

29 The Tanaïs is the modern River Don, which rises in Russia and flows into the Sea of Azov. In antiquity, the Tanaïs and Nile were viewed as marking the borders of Asia.

through those tribes which, according to Ctesias of Cnidus, were most noteworthy.

3 Amongst the lands on and adjacent to the coast he subdued Egypt, Phoenicia and also brought under his control Coele Syria, Cilicia, Pamphylia, and Lycia; and in addition to these Caria, Phrygia, Mysia, and Lydia. He added the Troad, Phrygia on the Hellespont, Propontis, Bithynia, Cappadocia, and the barbarian tribes who live on the Black Sea coast as far as the River Tanaïs. He came to rule the land of the Cadusians and the Tapyrians, that of the Hyrcanians and the Drangians, and in addition the Derbices, the Carmanians, the Choromnaeans, and furthermore the Borcanians and Parthyaeans and he attacked Persis, Susiana, and the region called Caspiana, the passes into which are extremely narrow and are consequently called the Caspian Gates.

4 He brought many other lesser tribes under his control as well, about which it would take a long time to speak. Since Bactria proved difficult to invade and contained large numbers of warlike men, when he was unsuccessful despite considerable efforts, he put off war with the Bactrians to another time and, taking his forces into Assyria, chose a place that was suitable for founding a large city.

THE FOUNDATION OF NINEVEH (= NINUS)

3.1 Although the deeds he had accomplished were more illustrious than any of those of his predecessors, he was eager to found a city so great in size that it would not only be the biggest in the inhabited world at that time but that also no one in future generations would easily surpass it.

2 After rewarding the King of the Arabians with presents and magnificent spoils he dismissed him, sending him home with his contingent; and Ninus, gathering forces from all around and collecting supplies of everything he needed, founded a strong-walled city alongside the river Euphrates, prescribing that its shape should be oblong.[30] Each of the longer sides of the city was 150 stades in length, the shorter 90.

3 And so with the whole perimeter wall totalling 480 stades, he was not disappointed in his hope. For no one afterwards ever founded a city so large in terms of the length of its perimeter and the

30 The description of the city in question, Ninus (i.e. Nineveh), is problematic for a number of reasons – not least the fact that it was situated on the Tigris, not the Euphrates.

magnificence of its walls. For the wall was 100 feet high, and its breadth was such that on top of it three chariots could ride alongside each other at once. All the towers – there were 1,500 in number – were 200 feet tall.

4 In the city he settled the majority of the Assyrians, including the most powerful, and volunteers from the other tribes. And he named the city Ninus after himself and for the benefit of the settlers included within its dominion a large amount of neighbouring land.

THE BIRTH AND YOUTH OF SEMIRAMIS

4.1 Since, after the foundation of this city, Ninus launched a campaign against Bactria where he married Semiramis, the most remarkable of all women of whom we have a record, it is first necessary to say something about how, from humble origins, she rose to such great esteem.[31]

2 Well then, in Syria there is a city called Ascalon, and not far from it is a large, deep lake full of fish alongside which there is a precinct of a famous goddess whom the Syrians call Derceto. She has the face of a woman but, for the following reasons, all the rest of her body is that of a fish.

3 The most learned natives tell the story that Aphrodite took offence at the aforementioned goddess and cast on her a terrible desire for one of those who had come to sacrifice: a young man who was not at all disagreeable. Derceto had sex with the Syrian and gave birth to a daughter; but ashamed at her wrongdoings she did away with the young man and exposed the child in a deserted, rocky place [in which a large number of doves were accustomed to nest; and so the baby unexpectedly found nourishment and a means of salvation].[32] Driven by shame and hunger Derceto threw herself into the lake and the shape of her body changed into that of a fish. Because of this, even to this day the Syrians abstain from this animal and honour fish like gods.

4 Because a large flock of doves was making its nest around the place where the baby was exposed, the child was unexpectedly and

31 Before Ctesias there is little mention of Semiramis: Herodotus mentions her only in passing at 1.184 where her major achievement is listed as the construction of flood defences near the city of Babylon. She is generally identified with Sammuramat, wife of the Assyrian King Šamši-Adad (who reigned from 823–11 BCE). She perhaps ruled between 810 and 805 BCE before her son, Adad-nārārī III, came of age. See Campoli 2002 and Melville 1999.

32 The text given here in square brackets is probably an interpolation.

miraculously nourished by them. For some kept the child's body warm by surrounding her on all sides with their wings, while others nourished her by bringing milk in their mouths from nearby stables whenever they saw that the cowherds and the other herdsmen had gone away and dropping it between her lips.

5 When the child was one year old and in need of food that was more solid, the doves provided her with sufficient nourishment by snipping off bits of cheese. When the herdsmen returned and saw the cheeses had been nibbled all around they were amazed at the strange occurrence. And so they watched closely and when they learnt the reason they found the baby, which was exceptionally beautiful.

6 And so they took her into their dwelling straightaway and gave her as a gift to the attendant of the King's cattle, whose name was Simmas. And since he was childless he reared the child with great care as if she were his own daughter, giving her the name Semiramis: this is a name derived from the word for doves in the Syrian language, which since that time everyone in Syria has continued to honour like goddesses.

THE MARRIAGE OF SEMIRAMIS AND NINUS' PREPARATIONS FOR WAR AGAINST BACTRIA

5.1 And so the stories told about the birth of Semiramis are roughly these. When she was already at a marriageable age and she greatly surpassed the other girls in beauty, a lieutenant was sent from the King's court to inspect the royal cattle. He was called Onnes and was foremost in importance in the royal court and had been appointed governor of all Syria. He lodged with Simmas and when he saw Semiramis he was captivated by her beauty. And because of this he begged Simmas to give him the girl in lawful marriage and took her to Ninus, married her and had two children by her, Hyapates and Hydaspes.

2 As Semiramis also had other qualities in keeping with her facial beauty, it so happened that her husband was completely enslaved by her and, because he did nothing without her advice, was successful in everything.

3 At that time the King, when he had completed everything to do with the foundation of the city he had named after himself, undertook a campaign against the Bactrians. Since he was well aware of the large quantity and prowess of these men and, what is more, that there were many places in their country which their strength of forces rendered inaccessible, he assembled a large force of men picked from

all the tribes in his power. For because he had been unsuccessful with his previous army, he was keen to arrive in Bactria with a force many times greater.

4 Once the army had assembled from all around they were counted, as Ctesias has recorded in his histories. There were 1,700,000 foot soldiers, 210,000 cavalry, and a little under 10,600 scythe-bearing chariots. (. . .)

THE BACTRIAN CAMPAIGN

6.1 And so Ninus, on his campaign against Bactria with this enormous army, was compelled to move his force in divisions because of the narrow passes and the fact that some places were difficult to gain access to.

2 For the Bactrian land was occupied by many large cities but had one that was particularly remarkable where the royal palace also happened to be situated. This city was called Bactra and surpassed all the others by far in its size and the strength of its acropolis. Its king, Exaortes, enlisted all those of military age who, when assembled, numbered about 400,000.

3 And so taking his force with him he went to meet the enemy at the passes and allowed a division of Ninus' army to attack. And when he thought that enough of the enemy throng had descended into the plain, he drew up his own force to fight. A fierce battle was joined and the Bactrians put the Assyrians to flight and after chasing them to the mountains which overlooked the plain killed around 100,000 of the enemy.

4 After this the whole of Ninus' force invaded, and the Bactrians were overwhelmed by their vast numbers and each man retreated to his city to help his own homeland. And so Ninus subdued the other cities easily but was unable to take Bactria by force because of its strength and the provisions it contained.

5 After the siege had been going on for a very long time, Semiramis' husband, who had been fighting for the King and was very much in love with his wife, sent for the woman. She, blessed as she was with intelligence, daring and all the other qualities which make a person exceptional, took the opportunity to exhibit courage of her own.

6 And so, since she was going to make a journey lasting a number of days, she first worked on a garment through which it was not possible to make out whether the wearer was a man or a woman. And it was serviceable for her both for travelling in the heat as it preserved her complexion, and for whatever needs she had, as she could see to

them inside it since it was supple and ample; in short, it had altogether such grace that later the Medes, when they had control of Asia, wore the cloak of Semiramis and afterwards the Persians did the same.

7 Once she had arrived in Bactria and assessed the state of the siege, she saw that there had been assaults from the plain on such places as were easily accessible, but that no one was attacking the acropolis because of its strength, and that those inside had abandoned their guard-posts there so as to provide additional help for the men in danger along the lower wall.

8 Consequently she took the soldiers who were experienced rock climbers and with them climbed through a difficult ravine, captured a part of the acropolis and signalled to those besieging the wall down on the plain. Upon the seizure of the citadel, the men inside left the walls in terror, giving up any hope of safety.

9 After the city had been captured in this way, the King was amazed at the courage of the woman and first rewarded her with large gifts, but afterwards became enamoured with the woman because of her beauty and tried to persuade her husband to give her up to him willingly, promising in return for this favour to give him his own daughter, Sosane, in marriage.

10 When her husband did not react well to this proposition, the King threatened to knock out his eyes unless he readily complied with the orders. Onnes, in part because he was terrified by the King's threats, and in part because of his love for his wife, was consumed with rage and madness, placed a noose around his neck and hanged himself. And so it was for reasons such as these that Semiramis attained a royal position.

THE REIGN OF SEMIRAMIS AND THE FOUNDATION OF BABYLON

7.1 Ninus took possession of the treasuries in Bactria, which held large quantities of silver and gold, and once he had established order in Bactria he dissolved his armies. Afterwards he had a son by Semiramis called Ninyas and then died, leaving his wife to rule as Queen. Semiramis buried Ninus in the palace and erected over his grave a mound of enormous size, the height of which was 9 stades and the width, Ctesias says, 10.

2 As a result, because the city lay on a plain alongside the Euphrates, from many stades away the mound looked as if it were an acropolis. And they say it remains to this day, although Ninus was razed to the ground by the Medes when they put an end to the Assyrian

Empire.[33] Because Semiramis was extremely ambitious by nature and eager to surpass the reputation of the man who had ruled before her, she took it upon herself to found a city in Babylonia, selecting architects and craftsmen from all over the world and, furthermore, providing all the equipment; for the completion of the work she assembled 2,000,000 men from all over her kingdom.

3 She diverted the river Euphrates into the middle of the city and surrounded it with a wall 360 stades long, punctuated with large, strong towers. Such was the scale of the works that the breadth of their walls allowed six chariots to ride alongside each other at once, and the height is unbelievable to anyone who hears about it, Ctesias of Cnidus says. Cleitarchus and some of those who later crossed into Asia with Alexander recorded it as being 365 stades long. And they add that her ambition was for it to consist of the same number of stades as there were days in the year.

4 Using asphalt to bind baked bricks together she built a wall 50 fathoms tall, so Ctesias says (but as several more recent writers have recorded 50 cubits), and wide enough for more than two chariots to ride alongside each other at once. The number of towers was 250, their height 60 [fathoms], but as some more recent writers say, 60 cubits.[34]

5 It need cause no amazement that, despite building a perimeter wall of such great size, she erected so few towers. For since the city was surrounded in large part by marshes, she decided not to build towers in this place, since the nature of marshes provided sufficient security. Between the houses and walls was left a road two plethra wide throughout.[35]

8.1 To accelerate the building of these works, she allotted a stade to each of her friends, giving them sufficient funds for this and telling them to finish the work within a year.

2 Since these men did what they were instructed with great speed she was pleased with their enthusiasm, and herself built a bridge five stades long over the narrowest part of the river, skilfully sinking its pillars into the bed twelve feet apart from each other.[36] She

33 The destruction of Ninus (Nineveh) took place in 612 BCE.

34 cf. T11j.

35 A plethron (pl. plethra) was equivalent to 100 Greek feet, i.e. approximately 30 metres.

36 This bridge is mentioned by Herodotus (1.186) where its construction is attributed to Queen Nitocris. There are remains at Babylon of a 115-metre long bridge whose pillars are 9 metres apart – constructed not by Semiramis,

interspersed the closely set stones with iron sockets and filled their joints with molten lead. In front of the pillars, on the side facing the current, she constructed a whole series of cut-waters with a curved side allowing the water to flow off; these were fastened alongside each other, a little way apart, for the width of each pillar so that the sharp edges around the corners would split the force of the current and the rounded sides, yielding to its force, would soften the river's strength.

3 And so the bridge was covered with cedar and cypress beams and enormous date-palm trunks, too: it was 30 feet wide and it seemed that none of Semiramis' works was superior in its artistry. From either side of the river she built expensive quays about the same width as the walls and 160 stades long. Right alongside the river at each end of the bridge she also built two palaces from which she planned to keep watch over the whole city and to keep in her possession the keys, as it were, to the most important places in the city.

4 As the Euphrates flows through the middle of Babylon and runs south, one of the palaces faced towards the sunrise, the other the sunset, and both were sumptuously built. For the one facing west she made its first perimeter wall 60 stades long, fortified with tall, expensive walls made out of baked bricks. She built a second circular wall inside this, on the bricks of which – before they were baked – all sorts of animals had been engraved, made true-to-life by the skilful application of colour.

5 This perimeter wall was 40 stades in length, almost 300 bricks wide and, Ctesias says, 50 fathoms high. The height of the towers was 70 fathoms.

6 She also built a third, inner wall which encompassed an acropolis, the perimeter of which was 20 stades, the height and width of the structure surpassing that of the middle wall. On the towers and walls were all sorts of animals, with the colours and copying of the figures skilfully executed. The whole ensemble was conceived as a hunt full of all variety of animals which were over 40 cubits in size. Semiramis was also depicted amongst them on horseback lancing a leopard with a javelin and nearby was her husband Ninus striking a lion with a spear which he held in his hand.

7 She also erected a triple gate, which gave on to bronze rooms and were opened by means of a machine. And so in size and elaborateness this palace far surpassed the one on the other side of the river.

however, but by Nebuchadnezzar II or his father Nabopolassar (i.e. in the seventh or sixth century BCE).

For the other one had an enclosing wall 30 stades long made from baked brick and instead of the skilfully-wrought animals it had bronze statues of Ninus and Semiramis and the lieutenants [*hyparchoi*] and one of Zeus, too, whom the Babylonians call Belus.[37] And on it there were armies drawn up for battle and various kinds of hunts, providing a colourful source of delight for onlookers.

9.1 Afterwards she chose the lowest lying spot in Babylon and fashioned a square reservoir, each side of which was 300 stades, built out of baked bricks and asphalt and with a depth of 35 feet.
2 She diverted the river into it and she built an underground passage connecting one palace to the other. She built vaults from baked bricks and then coated them on each side with boiled asphalt until she had made the coating 4 cubits thick. The walls of the passageway were about 20 bricks thick, the height (excluding the curved vault) was 12 feet and the width 15 feet.
3 This was built in seven days and afterwards she restored the river to its original course so that, since it flowed over the channel, Semiramis could pass from one palace to the other without crossing over the river. She also erected bronze gates on each side of the passageway which lasted until the reign of the Persians.
4 After this she built in the middle of the city a temple to Zeus, whom the Babylonians call Belus, as we have said. Historians have different opinions about this and as the building has fallen down over time, it is not possible to describe it accurately. It is agreed that it was extremely tall and that the Chaldaeans undertook observations of the stars in it since their rising and setting could be accurately monitored because of the building's height.[38]
5 After she had built all this lavishly and artistically out of asphalt and brick, at the top of the ascent she built three statues of beaten gold – of Zeus, Hera, and Rhea. Of these the statue of Zeus was standing in mid stride, was 40 feet tall, and weighed 1,000 Babylonian talents.[39] That of Rhea was sitting on a golden throne and weighed the same as the aforementioned statue of Zeus, and on her knees stood two lions and nearby there were enormous silver snakes, each weighing 30 talents.

37 The word translated lieutenant here (*hyparchos*) has a variety of meanings, e.g. 'subordinate commander' or 'the subordinate governor of a satrap'.
38 Herodotus' description of this zigurrat (1.181) is slightly at odds with that of Ctesias.
39 A Babylonian talent is equivalent to approximately 30 kilos (66 pounds).

6 The statue of Hera was standing, weighed 800 talents and in her right hand she held a snake by its head and in her left a sceptre set with precious stones.
7 A table of beaten gold stood alongside for the use of all three of them, 40 feet in length, 15 wide, and weighing 500 talents. On it lay two drinking cups weighing 30 talents.
8 There were also an equal number of censers, each weighing 300 talents.[40] And there were three golden craters, one of which was Zeus' and weighed 1,200 Babylonian talents and each of the others 600.[41]
9 But the kings of Persia later pillaged these things (. . .) .

SEMIRAMIS' WORKS IN MEDIA

2.13.1 When Semiramis had finished these works she marched on Media with a large force. After arriving at the mountain called Bagistanus she pitched camp nearby and built a park whose perimeter was 12 stades long; it lay on a plain and had a large spring thanks to which its nursery garden could be irrigated.
2 Mount Bagistanus is sacred to Zeus and on the side facing the park there are sheer cliffs stretching up to a height of 17 stades. She smoothed off the lowest part of the mountain and engraved it with her own image, with 100 spearsmen by her side. She also inscribed Syrian letters on the rock saying that Semiramis piled up the pack saddles of the attendant beasts in the plain in a heap as big as the aforementioned precipice and had, by means of these, climbed to the very top of the mountain.[42]
3 She then started out, and arriving at the Median city of Chauon, she observed a rock on a high plateau which was extraordinary in height and size. And so there she built another enormous park, leaving the rock in the middle on which she built lavish buildings designed for luxury from which she could see the nursery gardens in the park and the army encamped on the plain.
4 She spent a long time in this place enjoying to the full all manner of luxurious things; she was unwilling to enter a lawful marriage

40 Censers, often elaborately worked in metal, were used for the burning of incense. See Figure 8.
41 A crater is a large bowl, obstensibly for the mixing of wine and water.
42 Mount Bagistanus is the modern Behistun. It was in fact Darius who placed bas reliefs and trilingual inscriptions on the base of this mountain in the late 520s/early 510s to mark his accession to the throne (in 522 BCE), suppression of revolts, and various conquests. See Kuhrt 2007a, 141–159 and Briant 2002, 107–131.

since she was cautious never to be deprived of her power and instead selected those soldiers who were most outstanding in beauty, slept with them, and killed every one who had been with her.

5 After this she made the journey to Ecbatana and arrived at the mountain called Zarcaeon.[43] This stretched for a number of stades, was full of precipices and ravines and had a large circumference. And so she was both ambitious to leave behind a permanent memorial of herself and at the same time keen to shorten her journey. For this reason she cut down the crags and filled in the areas that were hollow to build a short and lavish road, which to this day is called Semiramis' road.

6 After arriving in Ecbatana, a city situated on a plain, she built a lavish palace there and paid the most extraordinary attention to the place in other respects, too. For the city was without water and there was no spring close by, so she gave the whole town a water supply, bringing in, with much hard work and expense, large quantities of good-quality water.

7 There is a mountain 12 stades from Ecbatana, which is called Orontes, exceptional in its ruggedness and the height to which it rises: the ascent in a straight line up to its summit would measure 25 stades. As there was a large lake on the other side which fed a river, she dug through the aforementioned mountain at its base.

8 The canal was 25 feet in width and 40 deep. And through it she diverted the river which was supplied by the lake and filled the city with water. And so this is what she did in Media.

SEMIRAMIS' OTHER WORKS IN ASIA

14.1 After this she visited Persis and all the other land in Asia under her control. And she built lavish roads everywhere by cutting through mountains and precipitous rocks and made mounds in the plains, sometimes building tombs for those of her leaders who died and sometimes founding cities on their heights.

43 Ecbatana was the capital of the Median Empire and the satrapal capital of the Achaemenid province of Media (modern Hamadan) in southwest Persia. Ctesias states the city was founded by Semiramis (Diodorus 2.13). Herodotus, who had probably not seen the site, gives an unconvincing description of the royal complex (Herodotus 1.98), which is superseded in accuracy by Polybius' later first-hand account (10. 27.3 ff.). Ecbatana was used by Cyrus and the later Achaemenid monarchs as a summer residence, treasury, and possible royal archive.

2 She used to build small mounds in the encampments, on which she would set up her own tent and observe the whole camp. For this reason there remain to this day all over Asia a great number of mounds that she built, which are called 'Semiramis' works' [*Semiramidos erga*].

SEMIRAMIS IN EGYPT AND ETHIOPIA

3 After this she visited the whole of Egypt and after subduing the greater part of Libya she arrived at Ammon to consult the god about her own death. It is said that the oracle given her was that she would vanish from amongst men and that she would gain eternal honour from a number of tribes throughout Asia. This would happen at a time when her son Ninyas plotted against her.

4 After coming away from there she visited and subdued the bulk of Ethiopia and went to see the country's sights. For they say that there was there a square lake which had a perimeter of about 160 feet, with water closely resembling cinnabar in colour and an extremely pleasant smell, not dissimilar to old wine.[44] It had a strange power. For they say that whoever drank it would fall into a fit of madness and would accuse himself of everything that he had previously done wrong and kept hidden. However, one may not readily agree with people who make such claims.

15.1 The people of Ethiopia organize the burials of their dead in a peculiar way. For after embalming the bodies and pouring a large quantity of glass round them, they put them on a pillar so that the body of the dead person can be seen through the glass by passers-by, just like Herodotus has said.[45]

2 Ctesias of Cnidus claims that Herodotus was inventing some details and for his part says that the body *is* embalmed, but that glass is *not* poured around the bodies when they are naked. For they would be burnt and completely destroyed and it would not be possible to preserve their likeness.

3 This is why a hollow, golden image is made which the body is placed inside before glass is poured around the image. The contrivance is placed on the tomb and the gold, which looks like the dead person, can be seen through the glass.

44 Cinnabar is a naturally occurring ore of mercury (HgS), bright red in colour.

45 Herodotus 3.24.

4 And so he says that the rich among them are buried in this way and that those who leave behind fewer possessions get a silver image and the poor one made of pottery. He says that there is sufficient glass for everyone as there is a large amount of it produced in Ethiopia and the inhabitants have it in great abundance. (. . .)

SEMIRAMIS' EXPEDITION TO INDIA

16.1 After putting things in Ethiopia and Egypt in order, Semiramis returned with her army to Bactra in Asia. As she had substantial forces and had been at peace for some time, she was keen to achieve some remarkable exploit in the field of war.

2 After learning that the Indians were the largest race in the inhabited world and that they lived in the largest and most beautiful land, she was minded to launch a campaign against India, of which Strabrobates – who possessed too many soldiers to count – was at that time king. He had a large number of elephants which were splendidly equipped with such things as cause fear in war.

4 (. . .) Although she had not been wronged in any way, when Semiramis had heard about everything in detail she was persuaded to wage war on the Indians.

5 Seeing that she needed an exceptionally vast force she sent out messengers to all the camps, impelling the commanders to enlist the best young men, giving them a target figure depending on the size of the tribes. She ordered them all to get new armour ready and to come with all the others to Bactria after three years, brilliantly equipped in all other respects as well.

6 She also sent for shipwrights from Phoenicia, Syria, Cyprus, and other maritime lands to whom she sent a liberal supply of wood and told them to build collapsible riverboats.

7 For the River Indus, which was the biggest in the area and formed the border of her kingdom, required a lot of boats, some to enable her to cross it and others to keep the Indians at bay, away from the other boats. As there was no wood around the river it was necessary to carry the boats on land from Ecbatana.

8 Seeing that she was at a great disadvantage owing to her lack of elephants, Semiramis planned †to build a peculiar kind† of these animals, hoping to frighten the Indians who thought that there were no elephants at all outside India.[46]

46 The text marked off by daggers is corrupt.

9 She selected 300,000 black cows and distributed the meat amongst the craftsmen and those charged with making the contraptions, and by stitching the hides together and filling them with straw she built models that mimicked the natural appearance of these animals in every way. Each of these had a man inside controlling it and a camel carrying it along, providing the illusion of a real beast to anyone looking on from afar.
10 The craftsmen building these models for her did their work diligently in a walled enclosure the gates of which were watched carefully so that none of the craftsmen inside went out and no one from outside went in. She did this so that none of the people outside could see what was going on and so that no report of these things should escape to the Indians.

17.1 In the space of two years both the ships and the beasts had been built, and so in the third year she sent for her forces to come to Bactria from their various places. The army when assembled was, so Ctesias of Cnidus has recorded, 3,000,000 strong in infantry, 200,000 in cavalry, and 100,000 in chariots.
2 There were men riding on camels with swords four cubits long: as many as the chariots in number. She built 2,000 collapsible riverboats, for which she had equipped camels to carry the boats on land. And the camels also carried the elephant models, as has been said already. By taking the horses towards the beasts, the soldiers got them used to being unafraid of the beasts' fierce nature. (. . .)
4 When Strabrobates, the King of the Indians, learnt of the size of the forces already mentioned and the extent of the preparations she had made for the war, he was anxious to outdo Semiramis in every respect.
5 And first he built 4,000 riverboats out of reeds. For alongside its rivers and marshy places, India produces a large amount of reeds that are so thick that a man could not easily stretch his arms round them. And it is said that the ships built from these were better suited for use since this wood is not prone to decay.
6 Having taken great care over the preparation of the arms he travelled throughout India and gathered a force much larger than that amassed by Semiramis.
7 He also went on a hunt for wild elephants, multiplying by many times the number he had before, and equipped them all splendidly with such things as cause terror in war.
8 And in consequence when they attacked, because of their large numbers and the towers on their backs, they looked like something no human being could withstand.

18.1 When he had made all his preparations for the war, he sent messengers to Semiramis who was already *en route*, accusing her of starting the war first without provocation; and in his letter he made a number of unspeakable, slanderous comments about her, saying that she was a whore (and calling on the gods as witnesses) and threatening to crucify her once he had defeated her.

2 On reading the letter Semiramis laughed at what he had written and said that the Indian would come to judge her virtue through her deeds. And when, while advancing with her force, she reached the River Indus, she found the enemy ships ready for battle.

3 Consequently, she quickly got her ships ready and, filling them with the strongest sailors, joined battle on the river while the foot soldiers, who were drawn up alongside the river, joined in enthusiastically.

4 The battle lasted for a long time, each side fighting keenly, but in the end Seriramis won and destroyed around 1,000 boats, taking a large number of men prisoner.

5 Elated by her victory, she reduced to slavery the islands and cities in the river and amassed over 100,000 captives. After this, the King of the Indians withdrew his force from the river, pretending that he was retreating in fear, but in reality wanting to encourage the enemy to cross the river.

6 Now everything was going according to plan for her, Semiramis spanned the river, building a large and very expensive bridge across which she conveyed all her forces; she left a garrison of 60,000 to guard the pontoon bridge and, with the rest of her army, advanced in pursuit of the Indians, with the model elephants leading the way so that the enemy spies would announce to the King that there was a large number of wild beasts with her.

7 Nor was she disappointed in her hope: rather, when the men who had been sent out to spy told the Indians about the large number of elephants that the enemy had, everyone was baffled about where such a large number of beasts as accompanied her had come from.

8 However, the ruse did not remain hidden for very long; for some of Semiramis' soldiers were caught in the camp during the night neglecting their guard duties; and fearing the consequent punishment, they deserted to the enemy and told them about their mistake concerning the elephants. Taking heart because of this, the King of the Indians informed his army about the models, drew his forces up in battle array and turned to face the Assyrians.

19.1 Semiramis did the same, too, and when the armies neared each other, Strabrobates, the King of the Indians, sent his cavalry along with the chariots far in front of the battle line.

2 But the Queen steadfastly withstood the cavalry's attack and, because the manufactured elephants were stationed in front of the battle line at regular intervals, it so happened that the Indians' horses grew scared.

3 The reason was that from afar the models had the same appearance as the real beasts to which the Indians' horses were accustomed and so they approached them perfectly confidently. As they grew close, however, an unusual smell struck them, and the other differences, which were considerable taken as a whole, threw the horses into utter confusion. As a result, some of the Indians were thrown to the ground and it so happened that others, since their animals would not obey their reins, were carried out haphazardly into the enemy ranks along with the horses that they were riding.

4 Semiramis, fighting with select troops and making skilful use of her advantage, put the Indians to flight. Although his men were fleeing away from the wings,[47] King Strabrobates was undeterred and advanced his lines of infantry, with the elephants leading the way; he positioned himself on the right wing and, fighting from the most powerful beast, advanced in terrifying fashion towards the Queen who happened to be stationed opposite him.

5 And because the rest of the elephants did the same, Semiramis' force withstood the beasts' attack for only a short time; for since the animals were incredibly strong and confident in their peculiar powers, they easily destroyed anyone who resisted.

6 Consequently there was considerable slaughter of all kinds, some men falling under their feet, others torn apart by their tusks and a number thrown into the air by their trunks. Since the heap of corpses was piling up thick, the danger of the situation roused terrible consternation and fear in those watching and no one had the courage to stay in position any longer.

7 And so the whole multitude turned and the King of the Indians pressed his attack hard on Semiramis herself. And first he shot an arrow at her and happened to strike her arm, and then he threw a javelin and pierced the Queen's back, but only with a glancing blow;

47 The Greek has 'towards the *phalanx*', probably best understood here as the 'main body' or 'centre' of troops (as opposed to the wings of the battle formation). In other words, the King's soldiers were disinclined to remain exposed on the periphery.

in consequence Semiramis did not suffer any serious injury and quickly rode away, the pursuing animal being inferior in speed.

8 Everyone fled to the pontoon bridge and with such a huge crowd forcing its way into one narrow place the Queen's men began to trample each other to death, since both cavalry and infantry were mixed together in an unnatural mêlée, and when the Indians attacked the fear this aroused meant that the jostling on the bridge became fierce – so much so that a number were pushed off the sides of the bridge and fell into the river.

9 But when the majority of her troops had brought themselves safely away from the battle and were out of harm's way because of the river, Semiramis cut through the fastenings holding the bridge together; and when these were loosened the pontoon bridge, cut into many parts and still teeming with pursuing Indians, was borne down by the fast-flowing current in haphazard fashion and killed a large number of Indians, whereas for Semiramis it provided great safety since she had prevented the enemy from crossing to reach her.

10 Afterwards, the King of the Indians kept quiet since a number of omens had appeared, which his seers interpreted as a sign not to cross the river, whereas Semiramis exchanged prisoners and returned to Bactria, having lost two-thirds of her force.

THE DEATH OF SEMIRAMIS

20.1 Some time later she was plotted against by her son Ninyas through the agency of a eunuch, and recalling the oracle given to her by Ammon, she did the conspirator no harm: on the contrary, she handed over the kingdom to him, ordered the governors to obey him and soon vanished, as if to give herself up to the gods in accordance with the oracle.[48]

2 Some relate the myth that she became a dove and flew away with a number of birds that had flown down into the house; and it is because of this they say that the Assyrians worship the dove as a god, since they thus make Semiramis immortal. And so this woman who had ruled all of Asia except India died in the aforementioned way, having lived 62 years and having reigned for 42.

3 Such, then, is the account that Ctesias of Cnidus gives of Semiramis in his history. (. . .)

48 This is the only source that indicates a peaceful succession (with the details of Semiramis' 'vanishing' somewhat obscure here). Elsewhere Ninyas is said to be responsible for her death.

THE DECLINE OF ASSYRIA: FROM NINYAS TO SARDANAPALLUS

NINYAS AND THE SUCCESSORS OF SEMIRAMIS

21.1 After Semiramis' death, her and Ninus' son, Ninyas, succeeded to the throne and ruled peacefully, not emulating in any way his mother's fondness for war and her adventurous spirit.

2 For in the first place he spent all his time in the palace, seen by no one except his concubines and attendant eunuchs, and sought luxury and idleness and the total avoidance of suffering and anxiety, thinking that the goal of a happy reign was to enjoy every kind of pleasure without restraint.

3 To ensure the safety of his rule and to assuage the fear that he felt in relation to his subjects, each year he sent for a fixed number of soldiers and a general from each tribe.

4 And he kept the army, collected together from all of his peoples, outside the city, appointing as commander of each tribe the most trustworthy of those in his coeterie; at the end of each year he once more sent for an equal number of soldiers from the tribes and dismissed the former ones back to their homelands.

5 The fact that he did this meant that all those subject to his rule were awestruck, since they always saw huge forces encamped in the open, ready as a means of punishment for anyone who revolted or did not obey.

6 He devised annual changes of soldiers so that before the generals and all the others got to know each other well, each went his separate way to his own land; for a long time spent on campaign creates in commanders both experience in military affairs and arrogance and most importantly provides great opportunities for rebellion and plotting against their leaders.

7 And the fact that he was seen by no one outside the palace meant that everyone was ignorant of the extent of his luxurious lifestyle, and no one dared to speak ill of him through fear, as if he were an unseen god. And appointing generals, satraps, administrators and judges besides for each tribe, and arranging everything else as seemed to him advantageous at the time, he stayed put in Ninus his whole lifetime.

8 The rest of the kings ruled in a similar way to this, son succeeding father to the throne, for 30 generations until Sardanapallus; for in his reign the Empire of the Assyrians passed to the Medes, having

lasted more than 1,360 years, as Ctesias of Cnidus says in his second book.[49]

THE ASSYRIANS HELP THE TROJANS

22.1 There is no urgency to record all the names of the kings and the number of years each reigned since there was nothing done by them worthy of mention. For the only event that has happened to be recorded is the sending of an allied force to the Trojans by the Assyrians, which Memnon son of Tithonus commanded.
2 For when Teutamus was King of Asia, who was twentieth in succession after Ninyas, son of Semiramis, they say that the Greeks undertook an expedition against Troy with Agamemnon, at a time when the Assyrians had controlled Asia for over 1,000 years. And they say that Priam, who was King of the Troad and a subject of the Assyrian King, was hard pressed by the war and sent an embassy to him to ask for help. And Teutamon sent out 10,000 Ethiopians and a similar number of Susians with 200 chariots, appointing Memnon, son of Tithonus, as their general.
3 And of those who had been appointed governor, Tithonus, who was general of Persis at this time, had a particularly good reputation at the King's court; and Memnon, who was in the prime of life, stood out for both his bravery and his brilliance of character. And the latter built his palace on the citadel in Susa which lasted until the time of the Persian Empire and which was called Memnonia after him; and he also built a public highway through the land which is still called Memnonia to this time.
4 But the Ethiopians near Egypt dispute this, saying that this man was born in their territory and they point to an old palace which they say is called Memnonia to this day.
5 But anyway, it is said that Memnon went to the Trojans' aid with 20,000 infantry and 200 chariots; and he was both admired for his bravery and killed many men in battles with the Greeks, and in the end was slain by the Thessalians in an ambush; and the Ethiopians gained possession of his body, burnt the corpse and took the bones away to Tithonus. And so this is what the barbarians say is recorded about Memnon in the royal records.

49 Numerous modern historians have taken issue with Ctesias' figures here. Lenfant argues that they probably had their origin in Ctesias' Babylonian sources rather than being mere inventions (Lenfant 2004, 244, n. 242). cf. F1oα where the figure of '1,000 years' is given; F1oβ where the figure is '1,306 years or a little longer' and F33a, where it is 1,450 years. On Ctesias and the idea of time, see above, pp. 65–66.

THE AFFECTATIONS OF SARDANAPALLUS

23.1 Sardanapallus, who was the thirtieth in succession after Ninus who founded the Empire and the last Assyrian King, surpassed all the others that came before him in luxury and idleness.[50] For apart from the fact that he was never seen by anyone outside the palace, he lived the life of a woman, and spent his time with his concubines, spinning purple cloth and working the softest fleeces, and he took to wearing female clothing and made up his face and his whole body with white lead, and other things courtesans customarily use, more delicately than any luxury-loving woman.

2 He purposely adopted a woman's voice and during his drinking sessions not only did he continually enjoy such drinks and food as were capable of providing the most pleasure, but he also pursued the delights of sex with men as well as women; for he freely enjoyed intercourse with both, not worrying at all about the shame engendered by the deed. (. . .)

4 Since these were the ways of the man, not only did he end his life in a disgraceful manner but he also utterly destroyed the Assyrian Empire, which had been the longest lasting of any recorded.

ARBACES AND BELESYS PLOT AGAINST SARDANAPALLUS

24.1 A certain Arbaces, a Mede by birth, outstanding in bravery and brilliance of character, was general of the Medes who were sent each year to Ninus. During his service he became friendly with the general of the Babylonians and was encouraged by him to put an end to the Assyrian Empire.

2 This man's name was Belesys, the most distinguished of the priests whom the Babylonians call Chaldaeans. And so since he had great experience of both astrology and divination he was accustomed to predicting the future to the masses with unerring accuracy. Because of this, and since he was also admired for it, he made a prediction to the general of the Medes who was a friend of his that it was very much fated for him to become king of the all of the territory that Sardanapallus ruled.

3 Arbaces praised the man and promised to give him the satrapy of Babylon when the deed had been brought to its conclusion and

50 The name Sardanapallus seems to be a transcription of Aššurbanipal, the last 'great' King of Assyria from *c.*669–627 BCE. The portrait painted of him by Ctesias bears little relation to what is known about the historical figure. See above, pp. 48–49, 84.

he, excited as if by the utterance of a god, associated with the leaders of the other tribes and started inviting them to sumptuous feasts and social gatherings, thus building a friendship with each of them.

4 He was keen to get to see the King face to face and to study his whole way of life. On this account he gave one of his eunuchs a gold cup and was introduced to Sardanapallus, and once he had observed his luxuriousness and pursuit of womanly habits up close he despised the King as worthless and was inclined all the more to entertain the hopes which the Chaldaean had inspired in him.

5 Eventually he entered a plot with Belesys to the effect that he would lead the Medes and Persians in revolt whereas Belesys would persuade the Babylonians to take part in the deed and also win over the leader of the Arabs, who was his friend, for the attempt on supreme power.

6 When their year's service was up and the other replacement force had come, the previous year's men were dismissed tribe by tribe to their native lands; at this point Arbaces persuaded the Medes to attack the kingdom and the Persians to be partners-in-command in their fight for freedom. Likewise, Belesys persuaded the Babylonians to strive for freedom and, sending ambassadors to Arabia, convinced the natives' leader, who was an acquaintance and guest-friend of his, to join in the attack.

7 After a year had passed all these men, having assembled a whole host of soldiers, came to Ninus *en masse* on the pretence of bringing a replacement force, as was customary, but in fact with the object of destroying the Assyrian Empire.

8 When all the aforementioned four tribes were gathered together in the same place,[51] the total number of them amounted to 400,000 and, after collecting together in a single camp, they consulted with each other as to the most advantageous plan for them to pursue.

REVOLT AGAINST SARDANAPALLUS

25.1 When Sardanapallus became aware of the revolt he immediately led out against them the forces he had from the other tribes. And first a battle was fought in the plain and those involved in the revolt came off worse, lost a number of men, and were pursued to a mountain 70 stades away from Ninus.

2 Afterwards when they had come back down to the plain and were preparing for battle, Sardanapallus drew up his own army against

51 That is, the Medes, Persians, Babylonians, and Arabs.

theirs and dispatched men to the enemy camp to announce that Sardanapallus would give to anyone who killed Arbaces the Mede 200 talents of gold, and to anyone handing him over alive he would make a gift of twice that sum and make him governor of Media.

3 Likewise he promised to give gifts to whoever killed Belesys the Babylonian or captured him alive. But since no one paid any attention to the announcements, he joined battle; and he slayed many of the rebels and pursued the rest of the horde to their camp in the mountains.

4 Arbaces and his comrades, losing heart because of the defeats they had suffered, called a council meeting and proposed that they should deliberate as to what they should do.

5 And so the majority said that they ought to return to their native lands, occupy stronghold positions and, as far as possible, prepare things useful for the war; Belesys the Babylonian, saying that the gods were giving them a sign that, albeit with toil and suffering, they would accomplish their plan, and encouraging them in other ways besides to the best of his abilities, persuaded everyone to endure the dangers.

6 But when a third battle came and the King won again, he captured the rebels' camp and pursued the defeated men as far as the borders of Babylonia. And it so happened that Arbaces, who performed some outstanding acts of daring and killed many Assyrians, was himself wounded.

7 So great were the rebels' successive losses that those in charge gave up hope of victory and prepared to go their separate ways, each to his own land.

8 But Belesys, after lying awake all night in the open air devoting himself to the observation of the stars, said to the men who were in despair about the matter, 'If you wait five days, help will come of its own accord and there will be a huge reversal and the whole situation will turn around.' For he said that his experience of the stars meant that he could see that the gods were giving them a sign to this effect. And he encouraged them to wait for this number of days to make trial of his own art and the kindness of the gods.

26.1 And so they were all called back and waited the allotted time, and then someone came announcing that a force which had been sent out from Bactria to the King was nearby and marching at speed.

2 And so Arbaces and his comrades decided to go out to meet the generals by the fastest route, taking along with them the strongest and most active soldiers so that, if they were not able to persuade

the Bactrians to join in their revolt with words, they might force them to share in the same hopes as them with arms.

3 In the end, first the commanders, then the whole force, proved willing to listen to the appeal for freedom and everyone pitched camp in the same spot.

4 It so happened that the King of the Assyrians was unaware of the Bactrians' defection at that time and, delighted by his previous successes, turned to relaxation and distributed amongst his soldiers sacrificial victims and a large amount of both wine and the other essentials for a banquet. As a consequence, while his whole force was feasting, Arbaces and his comrades learnt from some deserters about the idleness and drunkenness in the enemy camp and made an unexpected attack at night.

5 It was a case of organized men attacking disorganized men and the ready attacking the unprepared; they gained control of the camp and after killing many of the soldiers they pursued the others as far as the city.

6 Afterwards the King made Salaemenes, his wife's brother, general, and took care of affairs in the city himself. The rebels drew up for battle in the plain in front of the city, defeated the Assyrians in two battles and killed Salaemenes; and some of their opponents they slaughtered in flight while the others, who had been shut out on their return to the city and compelled to throw themselves into the Euphrates, they killed almost to a man.

7 So great was the mass of slaughtered men that the flow of the stream, mixed with blood, changed colour over a considerable distance. Then, because the King was shut up in the city and under siege, many of the tribes revolted, each deserting to the cause of freedom.

8 Sardanapallus, seeing that the whole kingdom was in the greatest danger, sent his three sons and two daughters away with much of his money to the governor Cotta in Paphlagonia, who was his most loyal subject; and he himself summoned forces by sending messengers with letters to everyone in his dominion and started preparing for the siege.

9 He was in possession of an oracle, handed down from his ancestors, which said that no one would take Ninus by force unless the river had first become hostile to the city. And so supposing that this would never happen, he persisted in his hopes, planning to endure the siege and to wait for the troops that would be sent from his subjects.

THE DEATH OF SARDANAPALLUS AND THE FALL OF THE ASSYRIAN EMPIRE

27.1 The rebels, delighted by their successes, pressed on hard with the siege, but owing to the strength of the walls they were completely unable to harm those in the city (. . .). The people in the city had an abundance of everything they needed since the King had thought about this in advance. Consequently, the siege went on and [the rebels] pressed them hard making attacks on the walls for two years and preventing those in the city from getting out into the country. In the third year, torrential storms persistently broke out and it so happened that the Euphrates grew swollen, flooded a part of the city and brought down a section of wall 20 stades in length.
2 At this point the King, thinking that the oracle had been fulfilled and that the river had clearly become hostile to the city, gave up hope of salvation. So that he would not fall into the enemy's hands he built an enormous pyre in the palace and heaped all the gold and silver on it as well as his royal clothing and, after shutting his concubines and eunuchs in the room he had prepared in the middle of the pyre, burnt himself and all the others to death and razed the palace to the ground.

THE ACCESSION AND RISE OF ARBACES THE MEDE

3 When the rebels learnt about the death of Sardanapallus, they took control of the city, storming it by the part of the wall that had fallen down and, dressing Arbaces in the royal garb, proclaimed him king and delegated supreme authority to him.[52]
28.1 Then, once the King had distributed gifts amongst the generals who had fought alongside him according to their merit and also appointed the tribes' satraps, Belesys the Babylonian, who had

52 Arbaces' accession to the throne marks the end of the Assyrian and the beginning of the 'Median Empire' (which extends to the rule of Astyages and the accession of Cyrus, who founded the Persian Empire in 550/49 BCE). According to the author of F30a, Ctesias' *Persica* stated that the Median Empire lasted 470 years, whereas Herodotus' figure is 128 years (although a calculation based on Herodotus' text in fact gives the total of 178 years: 1.102; 1.106; 1.130). If the name Arbaces corresponds to the Accadian Arbaku – the name of a leading Mede in the time of Sargon II, King of Assyria from 721–705 BCE – then Herodotus' figure would appear the more accurate. Scholars debate the very existence of a 'Median Empire'. See Kuhrt 2007a, 19–22 for a good outline of the problem.

predicted that he would be King of Asia, approached him and reminded him of his good services and asked Arbaces to give him the governorship of Babylon, just as he promised from the outset.

2 He also pointed out that, in those dangerous times, he had made a vow to Belus that once Sardanapallus had been subdued and the palace had been burnt he would take their ashes off to Babylon and, depositing them near the river and the precinct of the god, he would build a mound which would provide those sailing along the Euphrates with an eternal memorial of the man who brought the Assyrian Empire to an end.

3 He asked for this because he had found out about the gold and silver from a eunuch he had kept hidden, who had escaped and deserted to him.

4 Arbaces, knowing nothing of this owing to the fact that those in the palace had all been burnt to death along with the King, allowed him to take the ashes away and to have Babylon without having to pay tribute. Then Belesys procured boats and, along with the ashes, quickly sent the majority of the gold and silver off to Babylon. But once the King was informed of the act, which Belesys was in the midst of committing, he appointed as judges the generals who had fought alongside him.

5 Since the perpetrator admitted his wrongdoing, the court condemned him to death; but the King, since he was magnanimous and wanted to exhibit at the outset that his reign was moderate, acquitted Belesys of the charges and allowed him to keep the gold and silver he had carried off. Likewise, he did not revoke the governorship of Babylon that Belesys had been given, saying that the good services he had formerly had from him outweighed his later offences.

6 When news of his clemency got around, he enjoyed no ordinary good will – and esteem from the tribes, too – since everyone thought that a man who had dealt with wrongdoers in this way was worthy of the kingship.

7 And so Arbaces displayed clemency to those in the city and dispersed them to villages, giving each back their own possessions; but the city he razed to the ground. Then he took such gold and silver as was left behind from the pyre – a number of talents' worth – to Ecbatana in Media.

8 And so the Assyrian Empire, which had lasted from the time of Ninus for 30 generations and more than 1,300 years, was brought to an end by the Medes in the aforementioned way.

OTHER FRAGMENTS ON THE RISE OF ASSYRIA

THE LIFE OF SEMIRAMIS

F1c. Anonymous, *On Women*, 1

Semiramis: daughter, as Ctesias says, of the Syrian goddess Derceto and a Syrian man; she was raised by Simma, who was a servant of King Ninus, and after marrying Onnes, a royal governor, she bore sons. When he discovered that she had taken Bactria along with her husband, Ninus married her although he was by then an old man. And she bore him a child, Ninyas. After Ninus' death she fortified Babylon with baked bricks and asphalt and built the temple of Belus. After being plotted against by her son, Ninyas, she died at the age of 60, having reigned for 42 years.

THE NAME 'DERCETO'

F1d. Strabo, *Geography*, 16.4.27

The distortions of names, in particular barbarian names, are numerous: for example, they called Darieces Darius, Pharziris Parysatis, and Athara Atargatis; and Ctesias calls her Derceto.

DERCETO AND THE CONSTELLATION OF THE 'BIG-FISH'

F1eα. Eratosthenes, *Katasterismoi* (*Placing Among the Stars*), 28

. . . the so-called Big Fish . . . There is a story, as Ctesias says, that it was formerly in a lake near Bambyce. And when Derceto – whom the people living in those parts speak of as a Syrian goddess – fell in the lake during the night, this is what appears to have saved her.

F1eβ. Hyginus, *Astronomy*, 2.41
[original language: Latin]

The fish which is called 'southern' (. . .). This is thought to have saved Isis when she was in trouble; in return for this favour she placed a likeness of a fish and its children among the stars (. . .). And so many Syrians do not eat fish and worship gilded statues of them in place of Penates. Ctesias writes about this.

THE BACTRIAN MAGUS

F1f. Arnobius, *Against the Pagans,* 1.52.1
[original language: Latin]

Well, I pray now that the Magus Zoroastres will come across the fiery belt from the inner circle, so that we may join with our founder Hermippus, and that the famous Bactrian will come too, Armenius, grandson of Zostrianus, whose deeds Ctesias sets out in the first book of his *Histories* – and Cyrus' Pamphylian friend, Apollonius; Damigero, and Dardanus; Belus; Julianus, and Baebulus; and anyone else who is said to have had pre-eminence and renown in illusions of this kind.

THE REIGN OF SEMIRAMIS

F1g. Eusebius, *Chronography*, p. 29, 3–10 Karst
[original language: Armenian]

After this [i.e. Ninus' death] the queenship was assumed by Semiramis; she built a wall around Babylon, the nature and build of which has already been described by many – Ctesias, Zenon, Herodotus, and others after them. After that he [Cephalion] went on to narrate Semiramis' campaign against the Indian land and her defeat and flight; and how she butchered her sons herself; and how she was herself killed by her own son, Ninus, after she had reigned for 42 years.

F1h. Stephanus of Byzantium, s.v. Χαύων

Chaon: a region in Media. Ctesias in the first book of his *History of Persia*, 'Semiramis set out from there – she and her army – and arrived in Chaon in Media.'

TOMBS BUILT BY SEMIRAMIS

F1i. George Syncellus, *Extract of Chronography* (*Ecloga Chronographica*), p. 119

Succeeding him [i.e. Ninus] was the celebrated Semiramis, who raised mounds all over the world – because of floods, supposedly, but in fact they are the tombs of lovers of hers who were buried alive, so Cteisas records.

CITIES FOUNDED BY SEMIRAMIS IN EGYPT

F1k. Diodorus 1.56.5–6

I am not unaware of the fact that, as far as the aforementioned cities are concerned, Ctesias of Cnidus gives a different account, saying that some of those who came with her to Egypt founded them and named them after their native lands. It is not easy to set out the truth about these matters with any accuracy, but it must be considered worthwhile to record the points of disagreement amongst historians so that a judgement about the truth may be left entirely to the reader.

A SPRING IN ETHIOPIA

F1lα. Antigonus of Carystus, *Collection of Miraculous Stories* (*Historiarum mirabilium collectio*), 145

[According to Callimachus] Ctesias says that the spring has water which is red like cinnabar and that those who drink from it go mad.

F1lβ. *Paradoxographus florentinus* (*Pseudo-Sotion*), 17

Ctesias tells of a spring in Ethiopia which is similar in colour to cinnabar, and says that those who drink from it undergo a change in their mental capacity, so much so that they even admit to things that they have done in secret.

F1lγ. Pliny, *Natural History*, 31.9 [original language: Latin]

But there [i.e. at the River Gallus] moderation is necessary when drinking in case the water drives you mad: a thing which, Ctesias writes, happens in Ethiopia to anyone who should drink from the Red Spring.

THE CHILDREN OF ONNEUS PLOT AGAINST SEMIRAMIS

F1lδ. Nicolas of Damascus (*Exc. de Insidiis* p. 3, 24 de Boor = FGrH 90 F1) {L}

[Ctesias says] that after the Indian war Semiramis, when she was travelling in Media, went up a high mountain which was jagged on all sides except at one point and inaccessible because of the smoothness and steepness of the rock. From there she contemplated her army from a viewing point that she had just had built. Once she had encamped there, Satibaras the eunuch conspired against her with the

children of Onneus, plotting the whole thing himself and telling the children that there was a danger that they would be killed if Ninyas were king. He said that they should therefore steal a march on him and take power by killing their mother. And he said to them that, at all events, it was most shameful to allow their mother, given the age she was, to lust with impunity after so many of the young men she met each day.

And when they asked what the method would be, he told them not to put themselves out in any way, but to go up to her on the mountain top when he ordered them (this was *his* job) and to push her down from the summit. And they agreed to this and exchanged pledges in a sanctuary. Behind the altar where they made their pact there happened to be a Mede lying down who heard everything; and once he realized what was going on he wrote it all down on a parchment, which he sent to Semiramis *via* a messenger. On reading it the next day, she climbed to the top of the mountain and summoned the children of Onneus, telling them – after lengthy consideration – to come armed.

And Satibaras was delighted and went in search of the children in the belief that the affair was being directed for them by a god since their mother was calling for them to come armed. But when they arrived, she told the eunuch to take himself away and said to the young people: 'O wicked children of an honest father, who have been persuaded by an evil slave to plot the death of your own mother by pushing me from this place – when I have my authority from the gods! Well, here you have me! Go on, push me from this precipice so that you can truly hold renown amongst men and be rulers by killing Ninyas and your mother, Semiramis!' And she addressed the Assyrian people in the same way.

SEMIRAMIS CHANGES INTO A DOVE

F1m. Athenagoras, *Embassy for the Christians*, 30

For if [men like Castor and Pollux], although detestable and hated by Zeus, were reputed to be gods; and if the daughter of Derceto, Semiramis, a lustful and murderous woman, was thought to be a Syrian goddess; and if, because of Derceto, the Syrians venerate both doves and Semiramis (for it is impossible that this woman changed into a dove – the story in Ctesias), what is amazing about the fact that tyrants and men in power were called gods by their contemporaries?

OTHER FRAGMENTS ON THE DECLINE OF ASSYRIA

NINYAS AND HIS SUCCESSORS

F1n. Athenaeus, 12.38 p. 528ef

In the third book of the *History of Persia*, Ctesias says that all those who ruled Asia were earnest in their pursuit of pleasure, especially Ninyas, the son of Ninus and Semiramis. And so because this man stayed inside living a life of luxury he was not seen by anyone apart from the eunuchs and his own wives.

F1oα. Eusebius, *Chronography*, p. 29, 10–26 Karst
[original language: Armenian]

After her [i.e. Semiramis], Ninyas assumed power; about whom Cephalion reports that he established nothing worthy of record. And he then lists the other kings one after another; that they ruled for a period of a thousand years, power passing from father to son; and that not one of them held power for less than twenty years. For their unwarlike, leisure-loving, and womanish customs kept them in utmost safety; for they sat at home and had nothing to busy themselves with; and no one saw them face to face, except their concubines and eunuchs. However, if someone should be overcome with desire to familiarize himself with these kings, then Ctesias lists them by name, one by one – twenty-three kings, it seems to me. But what desire or pleasure does it give me to cite in a barbarian tongue names of tyrants who were bereft of any manly virtue and courage, cowardly, mollycoddled, and running wild?

F1oβ. Agathias, *Histories*, 2.25.4–6

4 (. . .) In the first instance Ninus evidently established a secure rule there and so, too, did Semiramis after him – as did all of their descendants one after another until Beleous, son of Dercetades.
5 For the succession by members of Semiramis' family finished with this Beleous when a man by the name of Beletras, a gardener who was guardian and overseer of the gardens in the palace, gathered an unexpected fruit – the kingship – and planted it in his own family, as has been recorded somewhere by Binon and by Alexander Polyhistor; this was the situation up until Sarpandallus, these writers say, when their rule withered up, when Arbaces the Mede and Belesys the Babylonian took it from the Assyrians by killing the King; they

transferred rule to the Median tribe, 1,306 years or a little longer having already passed since the time that Ninus first came to power there. For Diodorus of Sicily agrees with the lengths of time that Ctesias of Cnidus recorded.

6 So, the Medes ruled again and everything was arranged according to their laws.

THE REIGN AND CHARACTER OF SARANDAPALLUS

F1pα. Athenaeus, 12.38 p. 528f–529a

Such was Sarandapallus, too, whom some say was the son of Anacyndaraxes, others the son of Anabaraxares. And so Arbaces, one of the generals under his command and a Mede by birth, managed to get to see Sarandapallus through the help of Sparameizes, one of the eunuchs, and was permitted to do so with the King's consent, albeit with difficulty. And when the Mede entered and saw him made up with white lead, adorned like a woman, carding wool with his concubines and seated alongside them with his feet up, his eyebrows plucked, wearing female clothing, his beard shaved, and his skin smoothed with pumice stone – he was also whiter than milk and wore paint below his eyelids and when he saw Arbaces rolled back his eyes, showing only the whites – most writers, including Duris, relate that he was stabbed to death by this Arbaces who was indignant that a man of this sort was their king.

F1pβ. Aristotle, *Politics*, 5.10.22 p. 1311b40–1312a4

Other attacks were inspired by contempt, like the one on Sardanapallus whom someone saw carding wool with his women, if those who relate these stories are telling the truth. And if this is not true in his case, it could at least be true in the case of someone else.

F1pγ. Pollux, *Onomasticon*, 2.60

Ctesias says somewhere that Sardanapallus rolled back his eyes showing only the whites.

F1pδ*. Nicolas of Damascus (*Exc. de Virtutbus* p. 329.16 Büttner-Wobst = FGrH 90 F2) {L}

{He says} that Sardanapallus ruled the Assyrians, having received the kingship from Ninyas and Semiramis, and had his residence in Ninus.

He spent all his time inside in the palace, did not engage with weapons or go out hunting like former kings, but anointed his face, painted under his eyelids, and competed with his concubines in matters of beauty and hair-braiding, enjoying a feminine way of life in every respect. In line with arrangements drawn up previously, satraps from the other tribes presented themselves at his doors bringing with them the aforementioned forces. Amongst these was Arbaces, governor of the Medes, a man who led a life of self-control and who, more than anyone, had experience of public affairs – he was practised, too, in hunting and war, with a history of accomplishing many noble deeds, and at that time had intentions of accomplishing more and greater still. When he heard about the way of life and habits that the King employed, he was cast into thought and consequently concluded that it was for want of a noble man that Sardanapallus held power over Asia. And he devised a scheme that concerned the whole Empire.

F1pε*. Nicolas of Damascus (*Exc. de Insidiis* p. 4.23 de Boor = FGrH 90 F3) {L}

{He says} that during the reign of Sardanapallus, the King of the Assyrians, when Arbaces the Mede heard about the way of life and habits that the King employed, he was cast into thought and consequently concluded that it was for want of a noble man that Sardanapallus held power over Asia. At that time it seems that the Medes were the bravest tribe after the Assyrians. And so this Arbaces got to know Belesys, ruler of Babylon, when he was a fellow officer of his in front of the palace doors. He conspired with Belesys, who was a man of the Chaldean race (these were priests and were held in the highest honour) and together they determined to attack the whole Empire and to transfer the Assyrians' power to the Medes. The Babylonians were the most skilled of all in astronomy and were outstanding in wisdom, in divination by means of dreams and portents, and for having more or less complete knowledge as far as divine matters are concerned. What is more, it was at that time that Belesys, while talking to Arbaces in front of the doors near a manger at which two horses were feeding, fell asleep there at around midday. And in his sleep he thought he saw one of the horses bringing chaff in his mouth to him and the sleeping Arbaces, and the other horse asking, 'Why are you doing that, my friend – taking chaff to that man?' And the other one answered, 'I envy him: for he is destined to be king of all the lands which Sardanapallus now rules.' On seeing and hearing this, the Babylonian woke the sleeping Mede, and since

Belesys understood divine matters to quite a great extent he interpreted the meaning of the dream and told Arbaces to go to the River Tigris which ran near Ninus, washing its walls with its current. As they went they chatted about many things, as friends do, and Belesys said, 'Come on, Arbaces, if King Sarndanapallus made you Satrap of Cilicia, what would you give me for telling you the good news?' And he answered, 'Why are you making fun of me, my friend? Why would he overlook others superior to me and make *me* Satrap of Cilicia?' And Belesys said, 'But if he *were* to give it to you – and I speak as one with greater knowledge here – what thanks will I get from you?' And Arbaces said, 'You will have no cause for complaint, since you will share my power in no small way.' And the other said, 'If he were to make you Satrap of all Babylon, how would you treat me?' And Arbaces said, 'For god's sake, stop nagging me so much! For I don't think that it is fitting for a Mede like me to be mocked by a Babylonian.' And Belesys said, 'By mighty Belus, I am not saying all this to mock you, but because I have greater knowledge of the future.' And Arbaces said, 'Anyway, if I am ever Satrap of Babylon, I shall make you lieutenant [*hyparchos*] of the whole satrapy.' And the Babylonian said, 'Well, I've no reason to doubt you. But tell me this: if you were king of all the lands that Sardanapallus now rules, what would you do with me?' Arbaces said, 'Look, you wretch, if Sardanapallus heard you talking like this, you know full well that you and I would both meet a bad end! But why have you taken it upon yourself to say all this nonsense? Won't you stop babbling?' And taking hold of Arbaces' hand firmly, Belesys said, 'By this right hand of mine which is so precious to me and by mighty Belus: I am not speaking in jest, but because I am fully aware of what the gods have in store.' And Arbaces said, 'I shall let you have Babylon and everything dependent on it without having to pay tribute.' And when Belesys asked for his right hand to confirm all this, he gave it very willingly. And he said, 'Know, then, that you will truly be king.' And once they had made their pact they went back to the doors to attend to their normal duties. Afterwards, Arbaces got to know one of the most trusted eunuchs and asked him to show him the King; for he said that he was most keen to see who his master was. When the eunuch told him that what he desired was impossible, since no one ever met the King, Arbaces then kept quiet. And after leaving it for a little while, he asked the eunuch again, more earnestly this time, saying that he would pay a good deal of gold and silver for this favour. And the eunuch was won over by Arbaces, since he was extremely serviceable and disinclined to displease him, and promised

to mention it to his master when a suitable occasion arose . . . he lived where he died.

F1q. Athenaeus, 12.38 p. 529bd

Ctesias says that [Sardanapallus] went to war and, although he had assembled a large army, was defeated by Arbaces and committed suicide by burning himself to death in the palace; he heaped up a funeral pyre four plethra high on which he placed 150 golden couches and the same number of tables, also made of gold. He made a wooden room inside the pyre 100 feet long, and there laid out couches and reclined – not only he and his wife but his concubines, too, reclining on the other couches. Seeing that things were going badly, he had sent his three sons and two daughters to Ninus to the King there, giving them 30,000 talents of gold. He roofed the room with large, thick wooden beams and then put a number of thick pieces of wood in a circle so that there was no way out. He then placed on the pyre 10,000,000 talents of gold, 100,000,000 talents of silver, clothing, purple cloths, and all sorts of apparel. Then he ordered the fire to be lit and it burned for fifteen days. And men were astonished when they saw the smoke and thought that he was performing sacrifices: only the eunuchs knew what was happening. And so having lived an extraordinarily pleasant life Sardanapallus died as noble a death as possible.

MISCELLANEOUS INFORMATION ABOUT ASSYRIA

THE ANTIQUITY OF ASSYRIA

F2. Clement of Alexandria, *Miscellanies* (*Stromateis*), 1.102.4

If, according to what Ctesias says, Assyrian history starts earlier than Greek history by a good many years . . .

SEMIRAMIS' WARSHIP

F3. Pliny, *Natural History*, 7.207
[original language: Latin]

Philostephanus is the writer who tells us that Jason was the first to sail in a warship; Hegesias says it was Parhalum, Ctesias Semiramis . . .

THE BABYLONIAN FESTIVAL OF SACAEA

F4. Athenaeus 14.44 p. 639c

In the first book of his *Babyloniaca*, Berosus says that on the sixteenth day of the month of Loos a festival called Sacaea is celebrated in Babylon lasting five days in which it is the custom for masters to be given orders by their slaves, and that one of them, who is called a *zoganes*, is in charge of the house and is dressed in clothing like the King's. Ctesias also mentions the festival in the second book of his *History of Persia*.

BOOKS 4–6
MEDIAN HISTORY

THE RISE OF MEDIA

F5. Diodorus 2.32.4–34.6 [cf. Testmonium 3]

CTESIAS' SOURCES: THE ROYAL PARCHMENTS

32.4 Ctesias of Cnidus (. . .) says that it was from the royal parchments in which the Persians kept their ancient deeds, laid out according to a law, that he inquired closely into each and every detail and, after compiling his history, published it for the Greeks.

THE FIRST KINGS OF MEDIA

5 And so he says that after the overthrow of the Assyrian Empire the Medes ruled Asia, King Arbaces having defeated Sardanapallus in war, as was said before.

6 After he had ruled for 28 years his son Maudaces succeeded to the throne and ruled for 50 years. After him Sosarmus ruled for 30 years, Artycas for 50, the king they called Arbianes for 22 years, and Artaeus for 40.

PARSONDES THE PERSIAN AND THE WAR BETWEEN THE MEDES AND THE CADUSIANS

33.1 In the reign of Artaeus a war arose between the Medes and the Cadusians for the following reasons. Parsondes the Persian, a man admired for his courage, intelligence, and other virtues, was a friend of the King, and of all the members of the royal council held the greatest sway.

2 This man, aggrieved at a particular decision taken by the King, fled with 3,000 infantry and 1,000 cavalry to the Cadusians – he had given his own sister in marriage to the most influential man amongst them at that time.

3 Now that he was a rebel, he persuaded the whole tribe to aspire to freedom and was chosen as general because of his bravery. Then, when he learnt that a huge force was being amassed against him, he armed the Cadusians *en masse* and encamped near the passes leading into the country with all his men, no fewer than 200,000 in number.
4 When King Artaeus took to the field against him with 800,000 men, Parsondes prevailed in battle, killed more than 50,000 men, and drove the rest of the force out of the Cadusian land. Because of this he was admired by the natives and chosen king and then plundered Media continuously, ravaging every place there.
5 He acquired great renown and, when he was about to die of old age, summoned to his side the successor to his throne and made him take an oath that he would never put an end to the Cadusians' enmity towards the Medes. He said that if they ever made a treaty it meant the utter ruin of his descendants and all the Cadusians.
6 For these reasons the Cadusians were always hostile to the Medes and were never subject to the Median kings until such time as Cyrus transferred the rule to the Persians.

THE LAST KINGS OF MEDIA; ZARINAEA AND THE WAR BETWEEN THE MEDES AND THE SACES

34.1 After the death of Artaeus, Artines ruled the Medes for 22 years and Astibares for 40. During Astibaras' rule the Parthians revolted from the Medes and entrusted their land and city to the Saces.
2 As a result a war arose between the Saces and the Medes lasting very many years, and after a considerable number of battles had taken place, and after numerous casualties on both sides, they finally agreed to peace on the following terms: that the Parthians should be subject to the Medes and that each side should rule the territory they had formerly owned and be friends and allies to each other for all time.
3 At that time a woman called Zarinaea ruled the Saces who was devoted to warfare and her bravery and actions made her truly outstanding amongst Sacian women. And so this tribe generally has women who are brave and share in the dangers of war along with the men, but this woman is said to have been the most extraordinarily beautiful of all and admirable in terms of her projects and the detail of whatever she undertook.
4 She defeated those of the neighbouring barbarians who, spurred on by boldness, were trying to enslave the tribe of the Saces and she

civilized a large part of her territory, founded several cities and, in short, made the life of her tribespeople happier.

5 Because of this after her death the natives, giving thanks for her good deeds and in memory of her virtue, built a tomb which greatly surpassed any in the country. For they built a triangular pyramid, making each of its sides three stades in length and the height one stade, and brought together into a point at the top. And on top of the tomb they placed a giant golden statue and paid her honours worthy of a hero and all the other honours they bestowed on her were more magnificent than any of those granted to her ancestors.

6 When Astibaras, the King of the Medes, died through old age, his son Aspandas succeeded to the throne, who is called Astyages by the Greeks. And when he was defeated in war by Cyrus the Persian, the kingdom passed to the Persians.

THE STORY OF NANARUS AND PARSONDES

F6. Athenaeus, 12.40 p. 530d

Ctesias narrates that Nanarus, the King's lieutenant [*hyparchos*] who had held power in Babylonia, wore women's clothes and jewellery; and that, although he was a slave of the King, 150 women came to his dinner playing the lyre and singing. And they played the lyre and sang while he was dining.

F6b*. Nicolas of Damascus (*Exc. de Virtutbus* p. 330.5 Büttner-Wobst = FGrH 90 F4) {L}

1 {He says} that during the reign of Arbaces, King of the Medes and successor of Sardanapallus, King of the Assyrians, there was at that time amongst the Medes a man called Parsondes who was held in particularly high regard for his bravery and strength. Because of his wise counsel and physical beauty he was the object of much praise both in court and among the Persians – he was Persian by birth – and was talented both at capturing wild beasts and at fighting, whether in hand-to-hand combat, from a chariot, or from horseback. When Parsondes saw Nanarus the Babylonian, who clothed his body in eye-catching finery, wore earrings, and was particularly neatly shaven – womanish and feeble – he tried to persuade Artaeus to take Nanarus' territory away and to give it to him instead: so much did he disapprove of the man. But Artaeus shrank from going against what he had agreed with Arbaces and wronging the Babylonian. When Parsondes had

visited Artaeus two or three times and had heard the same reply, he stopped trying. But all this had not gone unnoticed by Nanarus. When he learnt of Parsondes' intentions, he promised great gifts to his people's merchants if anyone caught and brought him Parsondes: there were a good number of these attending the King's army.

2 And once, while Parsondes was out hunting on his horse, he happened to stray far from the King onto a plain not far from Babylon. He diverted his attendants into a nearby wood, telling them to shout and cry so as to drive the wild animals onto the plain. And he captured many wild boars and many deer. Eventually, while pursuing a wild ass, he became completely separated from his men and, riding all on his own, reached Babylonia where there were merchants preparing provisions for the King. When he saw them he asked them for something to drink because he was thirsty. And they were delighted to see Parsondes and let him approach; and pouring water for him, they took his horse and exhorted him to have some breakfast. Since he had been hunting all day it was not without pleasure that he listened to these suggestions and told them to send the ass which he had captured off to the King and to tell his slaves in the wood where he was. The merchants promised to do all this and settled Parsondes down on a couch. And they placed before him various types of food and poured out some extremely pleasant wine for him to drink, which they had intentionally made very strong so that he would get drunk. And when he had had enough, he asked for his horse so that he could go off to the King's army. And the merchants brought forward some attractive women which they showed him, telling him to spend the night there and to set off at dawn, after sleeping with them that night. And when he clapped eyes on the attractive women he decided to stay and spent the night there. And as a result of his love-making on the one hand and his weariness on the other, he fell asleep. And after making the woman he was sleeping with get up, the merchants fell on the fellow *en masse*, tied him up and took him to Nanarus.

3 When Nanarus saw him (Parsondes had already sobered up from the wine and realized that he was in trouble), he asked, 'Parsondes, did you yourself or one of your family suffer some ill at my hands in the past?' Parsondes said no. 'What, then? Did you *expect* to suffer some?' 'No, I didn't,' he said. 'And so why were you the one to start harming me unjustly, calling me effeminate and asking Artaeus for my kingdom, alleging that I am truly worthless and that you are noble? I owe much thanks to Artaeus for not being persuaded to take away the territory which had been given to me by Arbaces. Why did

you do this, you evil schemer?' And without employing the least bit of flattery, Parsondes said, 'I thought that I was more worthy of this privilege, since I am braver and of more use to the King than you, who are neatly shaven, paint under your eyes and make up your skin with white lead.' And Nanarus said, 'Are you not ashamed – a great man like you – to have been captured by your inferior just because your stomach and genitals got the better of you? Well it won't be long,' he said, 'until I make your skin softer and paler than that of any woman.' And he swore by Belus and Molis (for this is what Babylonians call Aphrodite).

And he immediately called the eunuch who was entrusted with the female singers and said to him, 'Take this man away and shave and rub with pumice stone his whole body except his head. Wash him twice a day and soap him with egg yolk. Get him to paint underneath his eyes and to braid his hair, like women do. Make him learn to sing and play the cithara and the lyre so that, having become like a woman, he can do me service along with the other girl singers, whose way of life he will share, since his body will be smooth and he will possess the same clothing and skills.' Once he had said this, the eunuch took Parsondes from him, shaved his whole body apart from his head, taught what had been prescribed and had him live indoors. He washed him twice each day, smoothed him down and made his lifestyle the same as the women's, just as his master had ordered. And in a short time the fellow became pale, soft, and womanly and sang and played the cithara far more beautifully than the girl singers (no one who saw him performing at a symposium for his master, Nanarus, would have thought he was not a woman) and of those with whom he performed each time he played by far the most attractively.

4 When Artaeus, the King of the Medes, grew tired of searching for Parsondes everywhere and offering gifts to anyone finding him either dead or alive, he supposed that he had been eaten by a lion or some other wild animal while out hunting and was greatly upset for him, since he was extremely courageous. After seven years of Parsondes living such a lifestyle in Babylon, Nanarus flogged one of his eunuchs and mutilated his body. And Parsondes, enticing him with high expectations, persuaded him to flee to Artaeus in Media and to tell the King about him: that he was alive, that he had been maltreated, and that he was living a life among female singers, '– Parsondes, your friend, the famous warrior!' And when the eunuch told him this, the King was delighted but at the same time let out a groan and said, 'Ah no! What an outrageous way to treat a noble man! How was the Parsondes I know able bear his enemy making a woman of him?'

And he immediately sent one of his most trusty *angaros* to the Babylonian (this is what they call the King's messengers).

5 When the *angaros* arrived and asked for Parsondes, Nanarus denied everything and said that he had not seen him anywhere since he had disappeared. When Artaeus heard this, he sent another *angaros* who was much bigger and more powerful than the previous one. And in a parchment, Artaeus commanded him to cast his Babylonian deceit behind him and to send off to him the man whom he had consigned to the female singers and the eunuchs – or else he would cut off Nanarus' head. This is what he wrote and at the same time he told his man, if Nanarus did not hand Parsondes over, to seize him by the waist and bring him back to be put to death. After the second *angaros* arrived in Babylon and announced all this, Nanarus was afraid for his life and promised to hand the fellow over and defended himself as well, telling the *angaros* that he would persuade the King that he had acted justly in taking revenge on a man who had initiated a great wrong against him. For he said that he would have suffered very grievously had the King, his master, not protected him. After this, he steered the *angaros* towards food and conversation by way of entertainment. Once dinner had arrived, the singers came in – 150 women in all – and with them there was also Parsondes. And some of them played the cithara, some of them the aulos, some the lyre, but Parsondes – passing as he did for a woman – was the most outstanding of them all in beauty and skill. And when they had had their fill of the meal, Nanarus asked the *angaros* which woman seemed to him to be the most outstanding in terms of her shapeliness and musicality. And without hesitating for an instant, he said, 'That one!' pointing at Parsondes. And Nanarus clapped his hands and laughed for a long time and said, 'So then, do you wish to take her and spend the night with her?' And he said that he would like that very much indeed. 'But I won't give her to you,' Nanarus said. 'So why did you ask me?' the *angaros* said. And after a short pause, he said, 'This is the man – Parsondes – for whom you have come.' The other man did not believe him, but Nanarus swore it was true.

And the *angaros* said, 'I am amazed that a valiant man has endured living like a woman and did not kill himself, if he was unable to kill others. How will my master bear it when he hears this?' And Nanarus said, 'I shall readily teach him that I have done nothing wrong.' This is what they discussed at that time before retiring to bed.

6 On the following day, the Babylonian put Parsondes in a covered carriage and sent him off with the *angaros*. When they arrived at

Susa, where the King was, the *angaros* showed him the man. And Artaeus, after being baffled for a long while since what he saw was a woman rather than a man, said, 'You miserable wretch, how did you endure being treated so shamefully without killing yourself before now?' And he answered, 'Master, necessity, it is said, is stronger than even the gods. If I put up with living despite these hardships, it was so that I had the chance of both seeing you and then taking my revenge on Nanarus with your help – which would not have been possible if I were dead. Well, don't deny me my second wish, master,' he said, 'on the contrary: exact justice from this man for me!' And Artaeus promised to do this as soon as he reached Babylon. Not long after, Parsondes regained his manly character and the King – who had been loudly petitioned by Parsondes every day to take revenge on Nanarus – arrived in Babylon. And Nanarus came to the King and said that he had acted justly: 'For it was he who started it by slandering me in your presence, despite the fact that I had done him no wrong,' he said, 'asking you to kill me and to give him the kingdom of Babylon.' Artaeus said that Parsondes had been perfectly reasonable to ask for this, 'for it is not for you to pass judgement nor to devise penalties: judgement should be put in my hands. I shall announce what penalty I consider fitting for you in ten days' time.' When Nanarus heard this he was deeply afraid and took refuge with Mitraphernes, who was the most powerful of the eunuchs, and promised him 10 talents of gold; 10 golden and 200 silver cups; 100 talents of silver in money, and sumptuous clothing besides – and for the King he promised 100 talents of gold; 100 gold and 300 silver cups; 1,000 talents of silver in money, and a huge number of clothes and many other beautiful gifts – if he would ask Artaeus for his life and the kingdom of Babylon. And the eunuch went to the King and – as a man who was held in the highest esteem – begged him repeatedly, saying that the man did not deserve to die, for he had not killed Parsondes, but had simply maltreated him in response to his own maltreatment and terrible suffering. 'And even if he does deserve to die,' he said, 'grant me this favour and fulfil my prayer for him. Nanarus will give you, his master, a great deal of gold and silver, and to Parsondes 100 talents of silver as compensation for what he did.' The King was persuaded by what the eunuch had to say and announced this result to Nanarus. And Nanarus prostrated himself before the King, but Parsondes shook his head and said, 'Damn him, the man who first discovered gold and brought it to the human race! For I am now a laughing stock to the Babylonian because of it.' And

the eunuch, observing that he had taken it badly, said, 'My good man, calm your anger, listen to me and become Nanarus' friend. For this is what your master wants.' And Parsondes looked out for an opportunity to take his revenge, if he could, on Nanarus and the eunuch. And when it came, he took it.

F6c*. Suda, s.v. ἐξεκεκλήκει {L}

exekeklēkei (he had called {them} out): he made {them} get up from dinner. 'He had called Nanarus' slaves out at nightfall.'

F6d*. Suda, s.v. σφοδροῦ {L}

sphodrou (excessive): magnificent, extravagant. 'The drinking became excessive and Parsondes, who was laying a trap, drank little himself but told his slave to pour plenty of wine in their cups.'

THE LOVE STORY OF STRYANGAEUS AND ZARINAEA

F7. Anonymous, *On Women*, 2

Zarinaea: When Cydraeus died, who was her brother and first husband and King of the Saces, this woman married Mermerus, the ruler of the land of the Parthians. When the Persian King launched an expedition against them, she was wounded in fighting and fled. Pursued by Stryangaeus, she supplicated him and was spared. Not long afterwards, her husband captured her and wanted to kill her. But she, begging to be spared but failing to persuade him, freed some of the prisoners and killed Mermerus with their help; and she gave the land back to Persia and made an alliance with him {the Persian King}, so Ctesias records.

F7b. Tzetzes, 12.887–892 {Kiessling 893–898} {L}

Learn about the Saces, a race who invented the *sacus*[53]
And whose women fight alongside the men,
As Ctesias and countless others have said.
'The Sacian women fight from horseback',
And again, 'a certain Stryangaeus, a Median man,
Struck a Sacian woman off her horse.'

53 The *sacus* {*sakos*} is a type of shield.

F7c*. Suda, s.v. ἐπρυτάνευσε {L}

eprytaneuse (he supplied): he offered, he furnished. 'He sends gifts for friendship and alliance, which Stryangaeus supplied.'

F8a. Demetrius, *On Style*, 213 {cf. Testimonium 14a}

A certain Stryangaeus, a Median man, struck a Sacian woman off her horse – for the women in Sacia fight like Amazons – and when he saw that the Sacian woman was young and good-looking he let her get away unharmed. Afterwards, when a peace treaty had been made, he was in love with this woman but failed to woo her. He resolved to starve himself to death; and first he wrote a letter to the woman, reproaching her as follows: 'I saved you and you were saved by me, and I am ruined for because of you.'

F8b. Papyrus Oxyrhynchus 2330

'. . . is that you were leaving pollution behind.' And he said, 'Right then, first I shall write a letter to Zarinaea.'[54] And he writes:

'Stryngaeus says this to Zarinaea,

'I saved you and you were saved by me, and because of you I am ruined and have killed myself – because you were unwilling to gratify me. I did not choose these trials and this love myself, rather Love destroyed me. This god is common to all men including you.'

'And so when he {Love} comes propitiously to someone, he gives them very many pleasures and does them very many benefits besides; but when he is angry and comes like he does to me now, he causes countless evils and in the end completely ruins and utterly destroys them. I bear witness to this by my death. For I do not curse you at all but pray to you the most just prayer of all: if you treated me justly, . . .'

F8c*. Nicolas of Damascus (*Exc. de Virtutbus* p. 335.20 Büttner-Wobst = FGrH 90 F5) {L}

{Ctesias says} that after the death of Marmareus, King of the Saces, Stryangaeus was secretly in love with Zarinaea for a long time and she with him. And when this man was near the city of Rhoxanake,

54 This text is corrupt in places, especially towards the beginning.

where the Saces had their royal palace, Zarinaea went to meet him. When she saw him, she greeted him with enormous delight, kissed him in full view of everyone and got into his chariot with him – and they reached the palace chatting to each other. Zarinaea also gave the army accompanying him a truly magnificent welcome. After that, Stryangaeus left for his quarters, sighing over his love for Zarinaea. Unable to bear it, he consulted the most trustworthy of the eunuchs attending her. And the eunuch encouraged him, urging him to cast his great cowardice aside and to tell Zarinaea herself. And persuaded, Stryangaeus jumped up and went to her. She gladly welcomed him in and although he kept beating about the bush, groaning and changing colour, he nevertheless plucked up the courage to tell her that he was consumed with love and burning with desire for her. She rejected him very gently, saying that the matter was shameful and harmful to her, and to him more shameful and harmful still, since he had a wife, Rhotaea, the daughter of Astibares, who she heard was much more beautiful than not only her but than many other women too. And so, she said, he must show courage not only towards his enemies, but also in relation to matters such as these, whenever there was an assault on his soul; and that for the sake of a brief pleasure that he could obtain just as well from his concubines, he should not suffer lengthy distress – as he would if Rhoetaea found out. And so she told him to let it go and to ask for something else, for there was nothing that she would refuse him.

After she had said all this, Stryangaeus was quiet for a long while, then once more took his leave and went away. He was deeply despondent and lamented his fate to the eunuch. Finally, he wrote some words on a parchment and he had the eunuch swear an oath to the effect that, once Stryangaeus had killed himself, he would give the parchment to Zarinaea, having said nothing to her about it beforehand. And this is what was written: 'Stryangaeus says the following to Zarinaea: I saved you and was responsible for all the good things you now enjoy. But you killed me and have deprived me of everything. So if you have acted justly, may you enjoy all these benefits and be happy. But if unjustly, may you experience the same suffering as me: for you advised me to be like this.' And after writing this, he placed the parchment on the pillow and asked for his sword to take himself off to Hades. But the eunuch . . .

BOOKS 7–11
PERSIAN HISTORY

Reign of Cyrus II (Cyrus the Great) (550/49–530 BCE)

THE ACCESSION OF CYRUS AND THE FALL OF MEDIA

F8d*. Nicolas of Damascus (*Exc. de Insidiis* p. 23.23 de Boor = FGrH 90 F66) {L}

THE HUMBLE ORIGIN OF CYRUS AND HIS ARRIVAL AT THE MEDIAN COURT

1 {Ctesias says} that in Asia, when the King of the Medes died, his son Astyages succeeded to the throne, who is said to have been the most noble man after Arbaces. During his kingship the great change occurred, whereby power passed from the Medes to the Persians, for the following reason.

2 It was a custom amongst the Medes that a poor man who approached a wealthy man for food, and gave himself over to him to be fed and clothed, was effectively considered his slave. But if someone took a man on but did not provide these things, the man was entitled to go and find someone else.

3 A certain young man by the name of Cyrus, a Mard by birth, approached a royal servant who was in charge of the palace decorators. Cyrus was the son of Atradates who, through poverty, was a thief. And his wife, named Argoste, Cyrus' mother, made a living by tending goats.[55]

4 And so Cyrus gave himself up to the man to be fed, and he became a palace decorator and was looked after. And his supervisor gave him better clothing and, from amongst the external decorators, took him

55 This account of Cyrus' parentage is somewhat at odds with other sources. In Herodotus, he is the king's grandson who, shortly after his birth, is given to a servant to be killed. This servant adopts him, however, but Cyrus' noble actions later reveal his royal blood (1.108ff.). See pp. 50, 64, 65 and Briant 2002, 14–16.

inside to the court's internal decorators and recommended him to their supervisor. But this man was harsh and often flogged Cyrus – who took himself off to the lamp-bearer. This man loved Cyrus and had him brought close to the King to be one of his lamp-bearers.

5 He distinguished himself amongst these men and so began working for Artembares, who supervised the cup-bearers and who himself extended the King's cup for him to drink from. And he gave Cyrus an eager welcome and had him pour wine for the King's messmates.[56] Not long afterwards, when Artembares was watching him attending the men properly and attentively, and delivering their cups gracefully, the King asked Artembares where the young man was from who was pouring wine so beautifully. And he said, 'Master, he is your slave, a Persian by race, one of the Mards, who gave himself to me to be fed.'

6 Artembares was an old man. And one day when he had a fever, he asked the King to let him go home until he got better. 'Instead of me,' he said, 'this young man you think so highly of (meaning Cyrus) will pour your wine. And although I am a eunuch, I shall make him my son, if you, his master, approve of him as a wine pourer.' And Astyages commended this course of action. And Artembares departed, giving Cyrus numerous orders and showing him kindness as if he were his own son; and as for Cyrus, he stood by the King, gave him his cup, poured him wine night and day, and began to give a glimpse of his extensive self-control and courage.

7 Artembares died from this illness after adopting Cyrus as his son. And Astyages gave him all of Artembares' possessions and many other gifts besides as if he had been his son, and Cyrus became powerful and his reputation spread far and wide.

ARGOSTE'S DREAM FORETELLS CYRUS' RISE TO POWER

8 Astyages had a daughter who was extremely noble and attractive whom he gave in marriage to Spitamas the Mede with the whole of Media as her dowry.

9 Cyrus sent for his father, Atradates, and his mother, Argoste from Mardia. And they came because he was now a powerful man. And his mother related to him a dream she had had in which she seemed to be sleeping in a temple while pregnant with him at the time when she was a goatherd amongst the Mards. 'While pregnant with you,'

56 The 'messmates' or *homotrapezoi* were the King's chief courtiers. See Briant 2002, 265, 308, 320, 623.

she said, 'I appeared to urinate so much that the mass of urine became like the course of a large river which swamped the whole of Asia and flowed as far as the sea.' When his father heard this he told them to ask the advice of the Chaldeans in Babylon. And Cyrus summoned the most learned of them and related the dream to him. And this man replied that it predicted something important and propitious, resulting in Cyrus enjoying the highest distinction in Asia. But he would have to keep it quiet to make sure that Astyages did not hear about it. 'For he will have you die the worst of deaths – and me as well, its interpreter.' And they swore to each other that they would not tell anyone about this potent vision or any other.

10 Afterwards, Cyrus became more influential and made his father Satrap of Persia and his mother foremost amongst Persian women in wealth and power.

CYRUS MEETS OEBARAS

11 At that time the Cadusians were hostile to the King. Their leader was Onaphernes who, in betrayal of his race because his thoughts were aligned with the King's, sent a messenger to Astyages asking for a trustworthy man with whom to plot his treachery. And the King sent Cyrus to assist him with everything. Onaphernes determined that Cyrus should return to him in Ecbatana in forty days' time. And the interpreter of the dream encouraged Cyrus to take himself off to the Cadusians and filled him with courage.

12 As Cyrus was noble and spirited, it entered his mind that, since he had the god's assistance, he should make the Persians revolt, try to depose Astyages from power, and put his confidence in the Babylonian who understood divine matters so extraordinarily well. And they encouraged each other: the Babylonian encouraged Cyrus by telling him that it was fated for him to depose Astyages and to take over his kingdom and said that he had very clear knowledge of this. And in return Cyrus encouraged the Babylonian by telling him that, if he became King once all this had taken place, he would reward him. And he thought about how Arbaces had previously deposed Sardanapallus and had taken away his royal office. 'And yet the Medes that he put his faith in were not superior to the Persians, nor was Arbaces any wiser than me. Fortune and Fate are singling me out in advance, just as they did him.'

13 As he was thinking about this, he met a man who had been flogged who was carrying dung in a basket (he was in the Cadusian mountains). Taking this as an omen, Cyrus communicated with the

Babylonian. And he told Cyrus to find out who the man was and what land his people came from. And to Cyrus' enquiry, the man replied that he was a Persian called Oebaras. And the Babylonian was very pleased. 'For in Greek "Oebaras" means "bringer of good news"'. And the Babylonian told Cyrus that the other signs were propitious, too, 'because he is Persian, your compatriot, and because he is carrying horse manure, which presages wealth and power, just as his name indicates, too.' Cyrus quickly intercepted the man and told him to join him. And he complied.

OEBARAS SUPPORTS THE PLAN FOR REVOLT

14 After this, he went to Onaphernes in Cadusia and exchanged pledges with him concerning their act of treachery. And he returned to Media. He rewarded Oebaras with a horse, Persian clothing, and servants, and kept him close – both because he could see that he had a good mind and because the Babylonian kept telling him to converse with him. Afterwards, he gradually grew closer to him as a friend and even made him his adviser. And one day he ended up saying something along the lines that he was sad to see the Persians maltreated by the Medes, especially as they were hardly their inferiors in spirit.

15 And Oebaras said, 'Cyrus, there is not a man alive these days who is spirited and noble-minded enough to resolve to overthrow these Medes, who think themselves worthy to rule their betters.' And Cyrus said, 'How come there isn't, Oebaras?' 'Perhaps there is someone – only he suffers from a good deal of base cowardice and for this reason does nothing, although he could.' And testing Oebaras, Cyrus said, 'If a bold man were to appear, how would he be able to bring this about?' And Oebaras replied, 'First by inducing the Cadusians to be willing to act – they love the Persians and hate the Medes very much – and then both by encouraging and arming the Persians, who number around 400,000: they would be ready and willing given what they suffer at the hands of the Medes. Their land is extremely serviceable for this, since it is both rocky and mountainous – and if the Medes want to march on it, they will escape only with difficulty.' Cyrus asked, 'If a man were to appear who did all this, would you share the dangers at his side?' And the other said, 'Yes, by Zeus: especially if it were you undertaking this, since your father is the ruler of Persia and you are †inviolable† and extremely powerful. But if not – I would do it whoever appeared.'[57]

57 The text marked off by daggers is corrupt.

OEBARAS' ADVICE AND PLANS

16 After this, Cyrus revealed his whole plan to Oebaras and used him as an advisor, since he saw that the man was wise and brave and that he put all his hopes in Cyrus' hands. And Oebaras approved of Cyrus, too, and gave him good pieces of advice, including that he should send to his father Atradates and tell him to arm the Persians – on the pretext that they would thus be ready for the King to fight the Cadusians, but in fact for the uprising. Then he advised him to ask Astyages to allow him to go to Persis for a few days to make some votive sacrifices for the King and for the King's well-being – and for his father at the same time since he was suffering from an illness. And he said that if he was going to be successful, the whole enterprise would need to be carried out courageously. 'Indeed, Cyrus, it is no terrible thing to put one's life in the utmost danger when undertaking great deeds and to suffer, if needs be, the same fate as awaits those who do nothing.'

17 And so Cyrus was delighted at the man's nobility and at the same time encouraged him by telling him about his mother's dream and the interpretation which the Babylonian had given of it. And Oebaras, quick-witted as he was, urged him on much more and encouraged him to keep an eye on the Babylonian, to make sure he did not divulge the dream to the King. 'If you won't tolerate him being killed, that is, which would be best.' And Cyrus said, 'That could only augur ill.'

18 From then on, Oebaras and the Babylonian shared Cyrus' table and spent their time with him. Since the Persian was afraid that the Babylonian would tell Astyages about the dream, he pretended to perform ancestral sacrifices to the moon at night and asked Cyrus for sacrificial offerings, wine, servants, mattresses, and everything else he needed. And he asked Cyrus to instruct the servants to obey him. And Cyrus did so, and did not take part in the sacrifice, which Oebaras executed skilfully. Amongst other things he prepared for the night deep beds of straw – [reclining] on which they could dine heartily – and dug a very deep hole inside his tent. Once he had done this, he fed the Babylonian well, got him drunk, and laid his bed out above the hole; and as he laid him down on it, he pushed him into the hole. And he threw his servant down with him.

19 And when Cyrus set out at daybreak, Oebaras travelled with him. After they had gone a little way, Cyrus began to ask after the other man. And Oebaras said that he had left him behind still sleeping off his drunkenness. But when Cyrus became annoyed,

Oebaras finally told him the truth: that he had killed him because he saw that this was the only way for Cyrus and his children to be safe. Cyrus was deeply grieved and more angry still at what Oebaras had done, so much so that he no longer allowed Oebaras to approach him. But in time he changed his mind, let him near him again, and used him as an advisor in the same way as before. And when the Babylonian's wife enquired after him, Cyrus said that he had been killed by robbers and that he had buried him himself.

CYRUS SEEKS PERMISSION TO LEAVE COURT AND GO TO PERSIA

20 Afterwards, when Cyrus had returned to the King, Oebaras spurred him on, explaining to him once again what they had determined to do: to send to the Persians, to arm the young men, and to ask Astyages to give him a few days to perform sacrifices and to tend to his father who was ill.

21 And he complied: the weapons were already at hand and Cyrus asked the King to let him make the journey to Persia so that he could perform sacrifices on his behalf and at the same time see his father who was in a bad way. But owing to his affection for him, the King did not let him go, because he wanted to be with him. And Cyrus was despondent and explained to Oebaras that he had failed. And Oebaras encouraged him and said that if he waited a few days and asked the King the same things again he would be successful: he just had to court him even more earnestly than before – and when he asked, he should do it through an intermediary and not himself.

22 And Cyrus went to court and asked the most trustworthy eunuch to press the King, when the opportunity arose, to let him leave. And so when Cyrus saw the King in playful spirits one day and the worse for drink, he signalled to the eunuch to say to the King that, 'Cyrus, your slave, asks you to be kind to him and allow him to do what he once begged you: to perform sacrifices and at the same time look after his father who is ill.' And Astyages summoned Cyrus and, smiling at him, granted him leave of five months, directing him to come back in the sixth month.

23 Cyrus prostrated himself before the King and appointed Tiridates to be cupbearer in his place until his return. And he went to Oebaras, delighted. And Oebaras told him to set off immediately, taking his servants with him, and (for he was a superintendent himself) got everything ready during the night and at dawn they began their journey to Persia.

ASTYAGES LEARNS ABOUT THE REBELLION AND PREPARES HIS RESPONSE

24 The wife of the Babylonian who had explained the dream to Cyrus had, it seems, previously learnt from her husband, when he was alive, about the vision which Cyrus had related to him. After her husband died she lived with his brother, and while sleeping at his side that night she heard from him that Cyrus had become powerful and was coming to Persia. And she related the dream and the interpretation of it just as she had heard her husband give it: namely that Cyrus would be King of the Persians.

25 At dawn, this man came quietly to Astyages, asking for admittance through the intermediary of a eunuch, and reported everything he had heard from his wife: namely that, when consulted about a vision, her dead husband, the seer, had interpreted it for Cyrus as a sign that he would become king, and this was why he was now going to Persia – he said that he had just heard this from his wife. And he described clearly every detail of the dream and its interpretation. Astyages became deeply anxious and asked the Babylonian, 'What should I do?' And he said, 'Kill him as soon as he gets back: this would be the only way to ensure against danger.'

26 And after sending the Babylonian away Astyages continued to think about his words a great deal. Towards evening, while drinking, he summoned those of his concubines that were dancers and cithara players. And one of them sang the following words in her song: 'Although the lion had the wild boar in his power, he let him go into his lair; he has become mightier there and will give the lion much grief and despite being weaker will ended up subduing one stronger.' As she sang, Astyages took her words as referring to him. He immediately sent 300 cavalry after Cyrus, instructing them to summon him back. 'And if he doesn't come, cut his head off and bring him back like that.'

27 They left and when they got to Cyrus, they told him what Astyages had said. And Cyrus, since he was quick-witted – or perhaps acting on Oebaras' advice, too – said, 'If my master summons me, why would I hesitate to go? Let's set off to him early in the morning; but for now, have some dinner!' And they consented to this. And Cyrus, cutting up a large number of cattle and oxen roasted in the Persian style, gave the cavalry a feast and got them drunk. He had previously sent a messenger to his father telling him to send 1,000 cavalry and 5,000 infantry to Hyrba (another city which lay further down the road) and to arm the other Persians in double quick time,

saying that these were the King's orders. For he did not reveal the real reason.

28 After the feasting, when the cavalry had given themselves over to sleep, Cyrus and Oebaras mounted their horses just as they were and rode off. They reached Hyrba while it was still night and Cyrus armed its men and drew up in battle line the troops that had come from his father. And he stationed himself on the right flank and Oebaras on the left.

29 Early in the morning, when the effects of the wine had worn off, the men who had come from Astyages realized what had happened and set off in pursuit of Cyrus. And when they reached Hyrba and found an army lined up in battle order, they began fighting. At the beginning Cyrus displayed great courage and, with the help of three Persians, killed around 250 of the cavalry. And the rest fled to the King and reported everything to him.

30 And the King struck his thigh and said, 'Alas! I resolved often enough not to treat bad men well, but I have been ensnared by fine words all the same: I took on Cyrus, a wicked goatherd, a Mard by birth, and produced such utter destruction for myself. But now he shall not enjoy the pleasures he desires.' And he immediately summoned his generals and told them to gather his forces together. And when they were gathered together – as many as 1,000,000 infantry, 200,000 cavalry, 3,000 chariots – he led them to Persia.

31 And there the army had already been equipped by Atradates, since he was aware of everything that was happening. And there were 300,000 peltasts, 50,000 cavalry and 100 scythe-bearing chariots.[58] And when Cyrus' forces had collected together in one place, he addressed them.

THE FIRST BATTLE

32 After this, Cyrus and his father drew the army up in battle order and appointed Oebaras general. He was a prudent and enterprising man who, in advance, positioned garrisons occupying the narrow passes and highest mountains, relocated the common people from unwalled to well protected towns and, where appropriate, fortified watch posts.

58 Peltasts were the light infantry whose main weapon was the javelin. The earliest peltasts came from Thrace, *peltē* being the name of the small shield with which these soldiers were originally equipped.

33 Not long after this, Astyages arrived with his army and razed the empty towns to the ground. Sending messengers to Cyrus and Atradates, his father, he threatened them repeatedly, reproached them about their former beggary, and ordered them to come back to him. For he said that all he would do was fasten them in heavy chains. 'But if you are caught,' he said, 'you will die a terrible death.' And Cyrus replied, 'So then, you didn't realize the power of the gods, Astyages, if you don't realize now that it was *they* who stirred the goatherds into performing these actions – which we *will* see through to the end. And since the gods were steering your thoughts to make you act to our advantage, we advise you to remove your forces and allow the Persians, who are superior to the Medes, to be free, lest by enslaving *them* you lose others.' This is what the messenger announced to Astyages.

34 And Astyages angrily led his army into combat and lined them up in battle order. He was at the head of his forces, mounted his horse, and surrounded by 20,000 bodyguards. Cyrus marched out against him, positioning Atradates on the right flank, Oebaras on the left flank, and himself in the middle with the Persian elite. Then there was a terrible battle. Cyrus and the rest of the Persians killed a huge number of men. Astyages, complaining bitterly on his throne, said, 'Alas! How brave these terebinth-eating Persians are!'[59] And he sent to his generals, threatening them with the punishments that they would suffer if they did not defeat the enemy.

THE SECOND BATTLE

35 The Persians, who were struggling owing to the sheer number of the enemy who were attacking in wave after wave, wheeled round and retreated into the city in front of which the battle was being fought. Cyrus and Oebaras encouraged the men who had come in, saying that they had killed more men than the enemy. They also advised them to send their wives and children off to Pasargade (the highest mountain) and to march out the next day and finally claim victory. 'Death lies before all of us whether we are victorious or

59 Persians are often referred to as 'terebinth-eaters' in Greek sources, the terebinth being an Asiatic/Mediterranean tree which produces a small red fruit. It has been suggested that the objects which Greeks called terebinth-fruits were in fact pistachio nuts (which they resemble in size if not so much in colour); whilst common in Persia, pistachios were unknown in Greece in antiquity: see Dalby 2003, 323 and Sancisi-Weerdenburg 1995, 286–289, 291–292.

defeated. So if needs be, it is better to suffer it in victory, having set our homeland free.'

36 When he said this, anger and hatred towards the Medes filled everyone and at dawn they opened the gates and marched out, led by Cyrus and Oebaras. And Atradates defended the walls along with the old men. Huge numbers of Astyages' troops marched out against them accompanied by hoplites and cavalry. While they were fighting, 100,000 troops surrounded the city, in line with Astyages' instructions, captured it, and sent Atradates, who was severely wounded, back to the King. After putting up a noble fight, Cyrus' men fled to Pasargade where their wives and children were.

37 When Cyrus' father was brought to him, Astyages said, 'You there! You were a good satrap for me and I rewarded you, and this is the thanks I get from you and your son.' And the old man, already expiring, said, 'I don't know which of the gods it was that stirred up this madness in my son. But don't you maltreat me! For in the state I'm in, I shall soon breathe my last in front of you.' And Astyages pitied him and said, 'In that case, I shall not punish you at all. For I know that if your son had listened to you he wouldn't have done these things, so I shall accord you a burial since you did not share in this madness of his.'

38 Atradates soon died and they buried him well and in fitting style and Astyages went along narrow paths to Pasargade. On this side and that the rocks were smooth and the mountain was high and jagged. Oebaras secured the passes in between with the help of 10,000 hoplites to stop him getting through. And there was no hope of getting through.

THE JOURNEY TO PASARGADE AND CLASHES IN THE REGION

39 When he realized this, Astyages ordered 100,000 men to surround the mountain in a circle and, once they had found a way up, to creep up and take control of the summit. During the night Oebaras and Cyrus fled with their whole army to another mountain which was less high than the first.

40 Astyages' army now went in pursuit, following the tracks which existed between the mountains. And Astyages' army then attacked and fought very courageously while ascending the mountain. There were steep precipices everywhere, and thick woods of wild olive trees. The Persians fought more bravely still, spurred on by Cyrus here and by Oebaras there, with Oebaras reminding them about their wives

and children and their ageing mothers and fathers whom, he said, it was shameful to abandon to the Medes to mutilate and maltreat. When they heard these words they took strength and as they went down they let out war cries and, through want of missiles, threw huge stones taken from olive presses and pushed the enemy back off the mountain.

41 And in some way or other Cyrus arrived at his ancestral home where he used to sleep when he was a young goatherd and he made a sacrifice there. He found some flour and after setting cypress wood and laurel underneath it, he lit a fire by rubbing sticks together, just like a poor man who had fallen on hard times. And straightaway there was thunder and lightning on his right-hand side and Cyrus prostrated himself and auspicious birds settled on his home presaging that he would reach Pasargade.

42 After this, they prepared dinner and slept on the mountain. And the following day, trusting in the birds, they went down to fight the enemy who were already creeping up the mountain. And they fought bravely for a long time. Astyages stationed 50,000 men at the foot of the mountain and ordered them to kill anyone afraid to make the ascent or who fled down to where they were. And so it was in the grip of necessity that the Medes and their allies made their ascent to attack the Persians.

43 When the Persians were in difficulties because of the enemy's greater numbers they began to flee to the mountain's summit, where their women were. And the women pulled up their dresses and shouted, 'Where are you off to, you cowards! Do you want to crawl back in where you came from?' (It is because of this episode that the King of the Persians, when he reaches Pasargade, presents gold to the Persian women and distributes to each of them the equivalent of 20 Attic drachmas.)

44 The Persians were ashamed at what they saw and heard and turned back to face the enemy. Running towards them, they drove them off the mountain in a single charge and killed no fewer than 60,000 of them. However, Astyages did not give up the siege.

CYRUS' VICTORY

45 Some time later Cyrus went into Astyages' tent, sat on his throne, and picked up his sceptre. The Persians shouted their approval and Oebaras placed the *kidaris* on his head saying,[60] 'You are worthier

60 A *kidaris* is a Persian headdress, probably a kind of upright tiara. See Figure 2.

than Astyages of wearing this, for god is granting it to you for your courage, and the Persians are worthier of ruling than the Medes.' They took all the treasures away to Pasargade under the direction of Oebaras, who appointed supervisors. Immense too were the profits that the Persians derived from their visits to the [Medes'] private tents.

46 Not long afterwards rumour told of the flight and defeat of Astyages and how his power had been taken away by the gods. And not just individual men but whole tribes revolted. The first was Artasyras, governor of the Hyrcanians, who came bringing an army of 50,000 men, prostrated himself before Cyrus and said that another, much larger army was available to him whenever he gave the order. After this, Parthian, Sacian, and Bactrian governors defected and, all of a sudden, everyone else – so much so that there was a rush on as each man wanted to defect ahead of the next, the result being that Astyages was left with few allies. When Cyrus attacked him not long afterwards and overcame him very easily in battle, Astyages was brought to him as a prisoner.[61]

CYRUS' WARS

F9. Photius, p. 36a9–37a25 (§1–8)

THE SUBMISSION OF ASTYAGES[62]

1 So, first of all he says that as far as Astyages is concerned, Cyrus was not related to him at all. What is more, Ctesias called him Astyïgas.[63] He says that in Ecbatana Astyïgas fled from Cyrus' sight and was hidden in the *kriokranoi* of the royal palace and that it was his daughter Amytis and her husband Spitamas who hid him.[64]

61 Cyrus' defeat of Astyages took place in 550/49 BCE.

62 In his *Universal History* Nicolas of Damascus draws on a version of the Foundation Legend of Cyrus in which he gives several peculiar details regarding Cyrus' parentage which might originate from Ctesias. Other Greek traditions ascribe Cyrus a noble birth but poor upbringing (Herodotus 1.95–130; Athenaeus 14.633d–e). For a discussion of the Founder Legend, see Briant 2002, 31–32.

63 The name of the last king of Media is familiar from most Greek authors by the spelling 'Astyages', although Ctesias prefers 'Astyïgas'. The spelling 'Astyages' was widely accepted in ancient historiography. See Herodotus 1.91; Xenophon *Cyropaedia* 1.2.1. Popular Greek etymology renders the name as 'breaker of cities'. The Babylonian form of the name is Iš-tu-me-gu, which corresponds to the Old Persian Ršti-vaiga, 'lance-hurler' or 'spear-swinger'

64 *Kriokranoi* may well be a Persian word that Photius has transcribed into Greek. However, the word may alternatively indicate a balcony space or the capitals

When Cyrus arrived, he ordered Oebaras to interrogate Spitamas and Amytis about Astyïgas under torture, and to do the same to their children, Spitaces and Megabernes. Astyïgas revealed his whereabouts so that the children would not be tortured on his account. After he was captured, he was bound in heavy chains by Oebaras, released soon after by Cyrus himself, and honoured like a father. At first, his daughter Amytis was treated with esteem like a mother, but then she was also taken as a wife by Cyrus after her husband, Spitamas, was killed because he had lied when he said that he did not know anything about Astyïgas when he was being looked for. This is what Ctesias says about Cyrus, which is different from what Herodotus says.

THE BACTRIAN WAR

2 And he says that Cyrus made war on the Bactrians and that the battle was evenly-matched. But when the Bactrians learnt that Astyïgas had become Cyrus' father and Amytis his mother and wife, they willingly gave themselves up to Amytis and Cyrus.

THE SACIAN WAR

3 And he says that Cyrus made war on the Saces and that he captured Amorges, the Sacian King and husband of Sparethe. After her husband was captured, Sparethe assembled an army and made war on Cyrus, heading a force of 300,000 men and 200,000 women. She defeated Cyrus and captured most of his men alive including Amytis' brother, Parmises, and three of his sons. Amorges was later released because of them, at which time they were released, too.

WAR AGAINST CROESUS OF SARDIS

4 And he says that Cyrus marched against Croesus and the city of Sardis, and that Amorges helped him.[65] And he tells how, according to Oebaras' plan, wooden figures representing Persians were displayed

of pillars adorned by carvings either of rams themselves or architectural flourishes that resembles rams' horns, *krios* being the Greek for 'ram'. Ctesias is the only source of information about Amytis, since Herodotus only mentions a woman named Mandane as Astyages' daughter (1.107; see Brosius 1996, 43).

65 Croesus was the King of Lydia from *c.*560 until his defeat by the Persians in *c.*548/7 BCE. See Briant 2001, 35–37.

above the wall and frightened the inhabitants and that the city itself was captured because of this. And how, before the city's capture, Croesus' son was given as a hostage because Croesus had been tricked by a divine apparition. And how, while Croesus was hatching plots, the child was killed in front of his eyes. And how its mother, on seeing this happen, threw herself from the wall and died.[66]

THE FALL OF CROESUS

5 And how, after the city was captured, Croesus fled towards the sanctuary of Apollo in the city. And how in the sanctuary he was tied up three times by Cyrus and how he freed himself the third time without being seen, despite the fact that the temple had been sealed and that Oebaras had been entrusted with the guarding of it. And how those who were tied up with Croesus had their heads cut off for betraying him by freeing Croesus. And that, after he was captured in the palace and tied up more securely, he was released again after there was some thunder and lightning. And then he was let go by Cyrus, although it was no straightforward thing. From then onwards, he was even treated with great care and Cyrus gave Croesus a large city, Barnene, near Ecbatana, where there were 5,000 cavalrymen, and 10,000 peltasts, spearmen, and archers.

THE DEATH OF ASTYÏGAS

6 He goes on to relate in detail how, in Persis, Cyrus sent away the eunuch Petisacas, who held great sway with him, to fetch Astyïgas from Barcania because Cyrus not only longed to see him himself but his daughter, Amytis, also longed to see her father. And how Oebaras advised Petisacas to kill Astyïgas through hunger and thirst by leaving him behind in a desolate place. And this is what happened.[67] But the pollution revealed itself to Amytis in her dreams and, after she had made repeated requests, Petisacas was handed over by Cyrus for punishment.[68] She gouged out his eyes, flayed his skin, and

66 Ctesias' stories about Croesus are certainly at odds with those we find in other sources. For different accounts of the fate of Croesus' sons, e.g. see Herodotus 1.43 and 1.85 and Xenophon, *Cyropaedia* 7.2.20.

67 No other source attributes a violent death to Astyages: cf., e.g. Herodotus 1.130.

68 The reference here is to the religious pollution (*miasma*) that was thought to attach itself to someone who had committed certain taboo and irreligious acts, in this case murder.

crucified him. Oebaras was afraid that he would be treated in the same way and, although Cyrus insisted that he would allow no such thing to happen, he nevertheless killed himself by going without food and water for ten days. Astyïgas was buried with great ceremony. And his corpse remained uneaten in the desert. For lions, [Ctesias] says, guarded his corpse until Petisacas came back and retrieved it.

CYRUS' CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE DERBICES

7 Cyrus marched against the Derbices, whose king was Amoraeus. And the Derbices set up an ambush of elephants and put Cyrus' cavalry to flight. And Cyrus fell from his horse as well. And an Indian man – for there were also Indians fighting alongside the Derbices (it was they who had provided the elephants, too) – and so this Indian man struck the fallen Cyrus with a javelin in his thigh below his hip. And he was dying from this wound.[69] His people then picked him up, still alive, and made for the camp. A large number of Persians died in the battle and just as many Derbices: for their dead also numbered 10,000.

When he heard about Cyrus, Amorges soon arrived with 20,000 Sacian horsemen. And a battle broke out between the Persians and Derbices and the Persian and Sacian army won a convincing victory. And Amoraeus, the King of the Derbices, died as did his two sons. 30,000 Derbices died and 9,000 Persians. And the land surrendered to Cyrus.

CYRUS APPOINTS HIS HEIRS AND DIES

8 When Cyrus was on his deathbed he made his eldest son, Cambyses, king and appointed his younger son, Tanyoxarces, master of the lands of the Bactrians, Choramnians, Parthians, and the Carmanians, and declared that he would not have to pay tribute on these lands.[70] As for Spitamas' children, he appointed Spitaces Satrap of the Derbices and Megabernes Satrap of the Barcanians. He told them to obey their mother in all matters. He also made Amorges their ally by having them pledge an oath of allegiance with him and each other. He prayed that whoever remained well-disposed towards

69 Cyrus' death and Cambyses' accession to the throne took place in 530 BCE. As we learn from Herodotus (1.214) there were a whole host of competing versions of how Cyrus died, a number of which also find their way into the works of later Greek historians (e.g. Cyrus' death in bed: Xenophon, *Cyropedia* 8.7; Diodorus 2.44.2). See Briant 2002, 49–50.

70 cf. Xenophon's account of these events at *Cyropedia* 8.7.11.

the others should prosper but called down curses on anyone who initiated any unjust act. This is what he said, and he died two days after he had been wounded, having reigned for 30 years. With these events ends the eleventh book of Ctesias of Cnidus.

THE DEATH OF ASTYAGES AND THE CAPTURE OF SARDIS

F9a. Tzetzes, *Chiliades*, 1.90–103 [Kiessling 87–100]

[Ctesias] says that Astyages was overthrown by Cyrus
And then made commander of the Bactrians by him.
And he says that Cyrus' great general, Oebares,
Set up wooden figures in Sardis
Dressed in clothes on extremely long poles during the night.
In this way he threw the Lydians into disorder and occupied the city.
Afterwards he relates the capture of Croesus.
Cyrus sent Petesacas to Astyages,
So that once he arrived he would see Amytis with Astyages.
When Amytis, who was Astyages' daughter, became aware
That this foremost eunuch, the miserable Petesacas,
Had plotted against Astyages,
She gouged out his eyes and flayed him alive.
She crucified him on a cross, making him food for the birds.

F9b. Theon, *Preliminary Exercises* (Progymnasmata), 7 (118 Spengel II)[71]

In the ninth book of Cteisas, [it is described] how, because they saw from afar the figures of Persians on long wooden poles upon the acropolis at dawn, the Lydians turned and fled, thinking that the acropolis was full of Persians and had already been taken.

F9c. Polyaenus, *Strategems*, 7.6.10

While besieging Sardis, Cyrus himself set up a number of long, similar-sized poles near the walls and, during the night, attached figures to them which had beards, Persian clothing, quivers on their

71 *Progymnasmata* are handbooks of preliminary exercises in rhetoric and oratorical composition.

backs, and bows in their hands and which stuck out all around over the walls of the citadel. And at daybreak he began making attacks on the other parts of the city. And Croesus' army were fighting off Cyrus' attacks when, turning round, some of them saw from afar the statues above the acropolis and cried out; fear seized them all, since they thought that the acropolis had already been captured by the Persians. And they opened the gates and fled, some here, some there. And Cyrus took Sardis by storm.

THE CITY OF BARENE

F9d*. Stephanus of Byzantium, s.v. Βαρήνη {L}

Barene: Median city near Agbatana.

ETHNOGRAPHIC AND ZOOLOGICAL OBSERVATIONS

THE CASPIAN CAMEL

F10a. Apollonius, *Miraculous Histories* (*Historiae mirabiles*), 20

Ctesias, in the tenth book of his *History of Persia*, says that there are certain camels in the region which have hair comparable to Milesian fleeces in terms of softness and that priests and other noblemen wear clothing made from it.

F11. Aelian, *On the Nature of Animals*, 17.34

Caspian goats are exceedingly white, have no horns, and are small in size and flat-nosed. Camels are more numerous, the largest being similar in size to very large horses and with exceedingly beautiful hair. For their hair is extremely soft, so much so that they rival Milesian fleeces in softness. For this reason both the priests and the wealthiest and most powerful Caspians dress in clothing made from this hair.

THE DYRBAEANS

F11. Stephanus of Byzantium, s.v. Δυρβαῖοι

Dyrbaeans: a tribe whose land reaches from Bactria to India. Ctesias in Book 10 of his *History of Persia*: 'a land which lies towards the

south is that of Dyrbaeans, which extends from Bactria to India. These are happy men who are both wealthy and very just: they neither maltreat nor kill any man; and if in the street they find some gold, a cloak, some silver, or anything else, they leave it where it is. They neither make nor eat wheat bread, nor do they think . . . unless it is for a sacrifice. They make barley meal which is relatively fine, just like the Greeks, and they eat herb cakes {made from it?}.

THE CHORAMNAEANS

F12. Stephanus of Byzantium, s.v. Χωραμναῖοι

Choramnaeans: a Persian tribe of savages. Ctesias in the tenth book of the *History of Persia*, 'So fast is the savage that he even catches deer when he hunts them.' And he says very many other things about them, too.

BOOKS 12–13
PERSIAN HISTORY

Reigns of Cambyses II (530–522 BCE), The Magus (522 BCE), Darius I (522–486 BCE), and Xerxes I (486–465 BCE)

THE REIGN OF CAMBYSES II

F13. Photius, p. 37a26–40a5 (§9–33)

THE BURIAL OF CYRUS THE GREAT AND THE INFLUENCE OF COURT EUNUCHS

9 The twelfth book begins with the rule of Cambyses.[72] When he became king he sent his father's corpse to Persia with Bagapates the eunuch to be buried. And Cambyses saw to everything else just as his father had ordered. Artasyras, the Hyrcanian, held the greatest sway with him, and of the eunuchs Izabates, Aspadates, and Bagapates were influential: the latter was also influential with Cambyses' father after the death of Petesacas.

CAMBYSES' EGYPTIAN CAMPAIGN

10 Cambyses marched on Egypt and the Egyptian King, Amyrtaeus;[73] and Combaphis, the eunuch who held greatest sway with the Egyptian King, surrendered Egypt's bridges (amongst other things) on the condition that he be made governor of Egypt.[74] And this is what happened: Cambyses arranged it with the help of Izabates, Combaphis' cousin, and he later spoke to him himself. And after

72 Cambyses succeeded to the throne in 530 BCE. See Briant 2002, 49–61 for Cambyses and the Egyptian tradition.

73 The campaign against Egypt took place in 525 BCE.

74 'Surrender' translates the Greek verb *kataprodidōmi*, which conveys a sense of betrayal.

capturing Amyrtaeus alive, he did nothing worse than make him emigrate to Susa with 6,000 Egyptians whom he had chosen himself. And he placed the whole of Egypt under his control; 50,000 Egyptians died in the battle and 7,000 Persians.

THE MAGUS SPHANDADATES PLOTS AGAINST TANYOXARCES

11 A Magus called Sphandadates, who had been flogged by Tanyoxarces for some wrong he had done, came to Cambyses maliciously claiming that his brother, Tanyoxarces, was plotting against him.[75] And as evidence of Tanyoxarces' disloyalty he suggested that if he was called for, he would not come. Accordingly, Cambyses made it clear to his brother that he should come, but Tanyoxarces put him off until later as some other business was detaining him. The Magus became more bold with his slanders. As Cambyses' mother, Amytis, was suspicious of the Magus' motives, she warned her son not to believe him.[76] He told her that he did not believe him, but in fact was completely taken in.

THE DEATH OF TANYOXARCES

12 When Cambyses sent for his brother a third time, he arrived and Cambyses welcomed him as a brother, but actually planned nothing less than to kill him. He hurried to carry out his plan without Amytis' knowing. And the deed was accomplished, for the Magus worked with the King to come up with the following plot. The Magus looked incredibly similar to Tanyoxarces and so he advised Cambyses to give an order in public for the eunuch to be beheaded, allegedly because he had spoken ill of his brother, the King, and in secret to kill Tanyoxarces and to dress the Magus in his clothes so that people would also take him for Tanyoxarces because of his attire, too. And this is what happened: Tanyoxarces was killed with bull's blood which he drank down and the Magus dressed in his clothes and people thought that he was Tanyoxarces.

75 This story corresponds to that told by Herodotus (3.60ff.) where the Tanyoxarces figure is called Smerdis. The Magus' name is recorded in Persian as Guamata: he was killed by Darius I in 522 BCE after reigning for seven months. Magi were priests who also played a role as advisors to the king.

76 Amytis is wrongly said to be the mother of Cambyses II and Tanyoxarces, when in fact their mother was Cassandane, the daughter of Pharnaspes (Herodotus 2.1, 3.2, 3.3; she is incorrectly called Meroe in Diodorus Siculus 1.33.1–2).

THE MAGUS IMPERSONATES TANYOXARCES

13 And for a long time he fooled everyone except Artasyras, Bagapates, and Izabates, since these were the only men in whom Cambyses confided about the affair. Cambyses called Labyxus, Tanyoxarces' chief eunuch, along with the others, and pointing out the Magus, who was sitting there playing his role, said, 'Do you think that man is Tanyoxarces?' And Labyxus said in amazement, 'Who else are we to think he is?' Such was the extent to which the Magus was able to fool them because of the similarity of his appearance. And so he was sent to the Bactrians and did everything as if he were Tanyoxarces. Five years later, Amytis was informed of what had happened by the eunuch Tibethis, after the Magus happened to have hit him. And she asked Cambyses to give her Sphandadates but he would not. Amytis called down curses on him, drank poison, and died.

EVIL OMENS AND THE DEATH OF CAMBYSES

14 Cambyses made a sacrifice and no blood flowed from the victims he had slaughtered. And he was despondent. Rhoxane bore him a child with no head; and he was more despondent still. And the Magi told him the meaning of these omens, namely that he would leave no heir to his kingdom. And his mother appeared to him in the night threatening him because of his terrible crime and he was even more despondent. When he got to Babylon, he was filing a piece of wood with a knife to kill time and struck himself in a muscle in his thigh and died ten days later after a reign of eighteen years.[77]

THE REIGN OF THE MAGUS AND DARIUS' RISE TO POWER

THE MAGUS IS REVEALED AS AN IMPOSTOR

15 Before Cambyses died, Bagapates and Artasyras plotted to make the Magus king. And they did succeed in making him king after Cambyses had died. Izabates took Cambyses' body to Persia. When the Magus was already ruling in Tanyoxarces' name, Izabates arrived from Persis, told the whole army what was happening, exposed the Magus, and took refuge in the temple. He was taken from there and beheaded.

77 Cambyses died in 522 BCE. For the death of the king and its aftermath see Briant 2002, 97–106.

SEVEN PERSIAN NOBLES PLOT AGAINST THE MAGUS

16 Seven Persian nobles then made a pact with each other against the Magus: Onaphas, Idernes, Norondabates, Mardonius, Barisses, Ataphernes, and Darius son of Hystaspes.[78] After they had all exchanged pledges, Artasyras also offered his assistance and then Bagapates, too, who held all the keys to the palace. With Bagapates' assistance, the seven entered the palace and found the Magus in bed with a Babylonian concubine. When he saw them, he jumped up. And when he found none of his weapons of war (since Bagapates had secretly and systematically taken all such things away) he smashed a golden chair to pieces and fought using one of its legs. Eventually he was stabbed to death by the seven after a reign of seven months.

DARIUS BECOMES KING

17 Of the seven it was Darius who became king because – in accordance with what they had agreed with each other – his horse was the first to neigh when the sun rose (thanks to some scheme or trick).

A FESTIVAL TO COMMEMORATE THE DEATH OF THE MAGUS

18 A festival, the Magophonia [Magus-killing], was held amongst the Persians on the day Sphendadates, the Magus, was killed.

THE REIGN OF DARIUS THE GREAT

CONSTRUCTION OF A TOMB

19 Darius ordered a tomb to be built for himself on the smooth mountain and this is what happened. He wanted to see it, but was prevented by both the Chaldians and his parents. His parents wanted to make the journey up there. When the priests who were pulling them up saw some snakes, they became frightened and in their fright let go of the ropes and Darius' parents fell to their deaths. Darius was deeply upset and had the priests who had been pulling them up beheaded, forty in all.

78 Herodotus gives a slightly different list of names (3.70). The source problems are many: see Briant 2002, 107–114, Kuhrt 2007b, 135–141, Balcer 1993.

EXPEDITION OF THE SATRAP ARIARMNES AGAINST THE SCYTHIANS

20 He says that Darius ordered Ariaramnes, the Satrap of Cappadocia, to cross over to Scythia and to take some men and women as prisoners of war. Ariaramenes crossed over with 30 50-oared ships and took some prisoners of war. He even captured Marsagetes, the brother of the Scythian King, whom he had found bound in chains by his own brother for mistreating a family member.[79] The Scythian King, Scytharches, was angry and wrote an abusive letter to Darius. And Darius wrote back to him in a similar vein.

DARIUS' EXPEDITION AGAINST SCYTHIA

21 Darius assembled an army of 800,000 men and built bridges over the Bosporus and the Ister.[80] He crossed into Scythia and marched for 15 days.[81] The two sides fired arrows at each other and the Scythians prevailed. As a result, Darius took flight and crossed the bridges and in his haste set them adrift before the whole army had crossed. Those men left behind in Europe were killed by Scytharbes, 80,000 in all. When Darius had crossed the bridge he razed the homes and temples of the Chalchedonians to the ground because they had planned to set the bridges near them adrift and because they had destroyed the altar which Darius had dedicated on his way through in the name of Zeus Diabatērios.[82]

DATIS' CAMPAIGN IN GREECE (THE FIRST PERSIAN WAR)

22 Datis came back from Pontus at the head of a Median fleet, laying waste to Hellas and the islands. Miltiades went out to meet him at Marathon and defeated the barbarians and Datis himself was killed.[83] And his body was not returned to the Persians when they asked for it.

79 The word used here is *kakōsis*, which has a range of meanings, but commonly indicates maltreatment by a person's natural protector.

80 The Ister is the River Danube.

81 The Scythian campaigns took place at some time around 513 BCE.

82 Ctesias evokes here the Greek custom of making *diabatēria*, i.e. offerings before crossing a river (a practice not normally associated with Persians and one not normally associated with Zeus). Herodotus does (4.87) record, however, the erection of two stelae by Darius before he crossed the Bosporus into Europe.

83 The Battle of Marathon took place in 490 BCE.

THE DEATH OF DARIUS

23 Darius returned to Persia, made a sacrifice, was ill for 30 days and died at the age of 72, after a rule of 31 years.[84] Artasyras also died, as did Bagapates after sitting beside Darius' tomb for seven years.

THE REIGN OF XERXES I

XERXES' COURT AND FAMILY

24 Darius' son, Xerxes, became king and Artapanus, son of Artasyras, was influential with him, just as his father had been with Xerxes' father – and Mardonius the Old was influential, too. Of the eunuchs, Natacas held the greatest sway. Xerxes married Amestris, the daughter of Onophas, and had a son called Darius, another after two years called Hystaspes and another, Artaxerxes.[85] And he had two daughters, one of whom was called Amytis, named after her grandmother, the other Rhodogyne.

XERXES' MOTIVATION FOR WAR AGAINST THE GREEKS

25 Xerxes marched against the Greeks because the Chalcedonians had tried to set the bridge adrift, as has been said already, and because they destroyed the altar which Darius [I] had set up; and because the Athenians killed Datis and did not return his corpse.

XERXES AT THE TOMB OF BELITANAS AND THE REVOLT OF BABYLON

26 Before this he arrived in Babylon and wanted to see the tomb of Belitanas, and he saw it with Mardonius' help. And he did not manage to fill the sarcophagus with oil as had also been prescribed.[86]

Xerxes marched out to Ecbatana and was told about the Babylonian revolt and the murder of the satrap, Zopyrus, at the Babylonians' hands.

This is Ctesias' version of events, which is not the same as Herodotus'. What Herodotus says about Zopyrus, except that a mule of his gave birth to a foal, Ctesias imputes to Megabyzus, who was Xerxes' son-in-law by his daughter, Amytis.

84 Darius died in 486 BCE; Xerxes I ruled from 486–465 BCE.

85 The Greek reads 'Dareiaios' for Darius.

86 See F13b, where Xerxes' failure to fill the tomb is seen as a bad omen.

Thus Babylon was captured through the help of Megabyzus. Amongst the many things Xerxes gave him was a golden millstone weighing six talents which is the most esteemed royal gift of all amongst the Persians.

THE WAR ON GREECE: THE BATTLE OF THERMOPYLAE

27 Xerxes assembled a Persian army of 800,000 (not including chariots), and 1,000 triremes and began his march against Hellas, building a bridge from Abydus.[87] Demartus the Spartan, who had joined him beforehand, accompanied him on the crossing and prevented him from marching on Sparta. Through Artapanus, who had 10,000 men, Xerxes attacked the Spartan general, Leonidas, at Thermopylae.[88] And the great Persian horde was cut down, while only two or three Spartans were killed. Then Xerxes ordered them to attack with 20,000 men: and these were defeated, too. Then they were flogged to fire them up for war and despite being flogged they still came off worse. On the following day Xerxes ordered them to fight with 50,000 men: and as he still did not achieve anything, he then put an end to the battle.

Thorax the Thessalian and the leaders of the Trachinians, Calliades, and Timaphernes, were there with their armies. Xerxes summoned these to him along with Demartus and Hygias the Ephesian and learnt that the Spartans would not be beaten unless they were encircled. Under the leadership of the two Trachinians, a Persian army of 40,000 men went round by a near-impassable route and reached the back of the Spartans. The encircled men all died fighting bravely.

THE BATTLE OF PLATAEA

28 Xerxes once more sent an army of 120,000 to fight the Plataeans, appointing Mardonius as their leader.[89] It was the Thebans who urged Xerxes to fight the Plataeans. The Spartan, Pausanias, came out to

87 Herodotus says that Xerxes' troops numbered 1,700,000 (7.60).

88 cf. Herodotus' account of the Battle of Thermopylae at 7.201ff. The Battle of Thermopylae, capture of Athens and Battle of Salamis all took place in 480 BCE.

89 Ctesias makes an error here in placing the Battle of Plataea (479 BCE) and the plundering of the Temple of Apollo at Delphi before the Battle of Salamis. This may, however, reflect his Persian sources (with Persian historians perhaps reasoning that these events occurred sequentially as Darius journeyed south).

meet him with 300 Spartiatae, 1,000 Perioeci, and 6,000 men from other city-states.[90] And the Persian army was heavily defeated and even Mardonius was wounded and fled.

MARDONIUS PILLAGES DELPHI

29 This same Mardonius was sent by Xerxes to plunder the temple of Apollo. And Ctesias says that he died there following a heavy hailstorm. Xerxes was deeply saddened by this.

THE CAPTURE OF ATHENS AND THE BATTLE OF SALAMIS

30 Xerxes marched on Athens itself. And the Athenians manned 110 triremes and fled to Salamis. And Xerxes captured the city and burnt everything apart from the Acropolis, where there were still some people left behind who kept on fighting. Eventually they, too, fled at night and the Acropolis was razed to the ground.

From there Xerxes went to the narrowest part of Attica, which is called Heraclion, and started building an earthwork in the direction of Salamis with the intention of crossing there on foot. Following the advice of Themistocles, the Athenian, and Aristidus, archers were summoned from Crete – and they came. Then there was a sea battle between the Persians and the Greeks. The Persians, led by Onaphas, had over 1,000 ships, whereas the Greeks had 700. The Greeks won and 500 Persian ships were destroyed. Xerxes fled, once more thanks to the advice and skill of Aristides and Themistocles. In all the remaining battles 120,000 Persians died.

THE PILLAGE OF DELPHI

31 Xerxes crossed into Asia, led his army to Sardis, and tried to send Megabyzus to plunder the sanctuary at Delphi. When he refused, the eunuch Matacas was sent to plunder everything, bringing messages of abuse for Apollo. And when he had done all this, he returned to Xerxes.

XERXES RETURNS TO PERSIA

32 Xerxes came to Persia from Babylon. And Megabyzus began to make accusations against his own wife, Amytis, who was the daughter

90 Perioeci (*perioikoi*, 'dwellers round about'), Sparta's merchant class, regularly served alongside its full citizens, the Spartiatae, in battle.

of Xerxes, as was said earlier, saying that she had committed adultery. Amytis was spoken to by her father in no uncertain terms and promised to behave moderately in future.

THE ASSASSINATION OF XERXES AND PRINCE DARIUS

33 Artapanus, who held a lot of influence with Xerxes, plotted with the eunuch Spamitres, who also held a lot of influence, to kill Xerxes. And they did kill him. And they persuaded his son, Artaxerxes, that his other son, Darius, had killed him. Artaxerxes arrived at Darius' house, brought there by Artapanus. Darius shouted a good deal and refuted all claims that he was his father's murderer: he was killed.[91]

REASONS FOR CAMBYSES' EGYPTIAN EXPEDITION

F13a. Athenaeus, 13.10 p. 560de

And Cambyses' expedition against Egypt, Ctesias says, came about because of a woman. For when Cambyses learnt that Egyptian women were superior to others when it came to sexual intercourse, he sent to Amasis, the Egyptian King, asking for one of his daughters in marriage. But the King did not give him one of his own, since he suspected that she would have the status not of a wife but that of a concubine: he sent Neitetis, the daughter of Aprias. Aprias had been banished from the kingdom of Egypt because of the defeat he had suffered at the hands of the Cyreneans and had been killed by Amasis. And so Cambyses, who was delighted with Neitetis, was goaded by her a good deal and learnt the whole story from her; and when she asked him to avenge the murder of Aprias he was persuaded to make war on the Egyptians.

XERXES AT THE TOMB OF BELUS AND THE ASSASSINATION OF XERXES

F13b*. Aelian, *Historical Miscellany*, 13.3 {L}

When Xerxes, son of Darius, excavated the tomb of ancient Belus, he found a glass sarcophagus, inside which the corpse was lying in oil. However, the sarcophagus was not full: rather, the oil came up to about a palm's width from the rim. A small stele lay beside the

91 Xerxes was killed in 465 BCE and was succeeded by his son, Artaxerxes I. For events, see Briant 2002, 565–567.

sarcophagus, on which was written: 'Things will not go well for anyone who opens the tomb and does not fill the sarcophagus up.' On reading this, Xerxes was fearful and ordered his men to pour oil in as quickly as possible. But it did not fill up. And he ordered them to pour oil in once again. But the level would not increase and eventually he gave up pouring the oil in and squandering it in vain. After closing up the tomb he went away very troubled indeed. But the stele was not wrong in what it predicted; for after gathering 700,000 men to fight the Greeks he came off badly, and then after returning he died in the most shameful way a man can die, by having his throat cut by his son in bed at night.[92]

92 This is at odds with the account given by Photius (F13, 33: see above), though it is perhaps a garbled précis of the same events.

BOOKS 16–17
PERSIAN HISTORY
Reign of Artaxerxes I (465–424 BCE)

REVOLTS AND COURT AFFAIRS UNDER ARTAXERXES I

F14. Photius, p. 40a5–41b37 (§34–46)

THE ACCESSION OF ARTAXERXES I AND A COUNTER-PLOT IN THE ROYAL HOUSE

34 Artaxerxes became king, thanks to Artapanus' exertions.[93] And Artapanus plotted against him in turn and enlisted Megabyzus as an accomplice in his scheme, who was already distressed because of his wife, Amytis, and his suspicion of her adultery. They pledged oaths of loyalty to each other. And Megabyzus betrayed all their plans and Artapanus was killed in the way in which he had intended to kill Artaxerxes. And everything that had been done to Xerxes and [Prince] Darius came to light. Aspamitres, who had been an accomplice in the deaths of Xerxes and Darius also suffered a very nasty and painful death. He was killed by being exposed in the full sun in a trough.[94] After Artapanus' death there was a battle between those Persians who had sworn allegiance with him and the rest. In the battle the three sons of Artapanus were killed. Megabyzus was seriously injured, too, and Artaxerxes, Amytis, Rhodogyne, and their mother, Amestris, were all grief stricken. And he was just saved owing to the great pains taken by Apollonides, a doctor from Cos.

93 Artaxerxes I ruled from 465–424 BCE. For his reign see Briant 2002, 569–591.
94 The verb used here is derived from the Greek word *skaphē* meaning a 'trough', 'tub', or 'light boat': the form of torture described is usually referred to as the 'Torture of the Boats'. See F26, 16–37 below.

THE BACTRIAN REVOLT

35 Bactria and its satrap, another Artapanus, revolted against Artaxerxes. There was an evenly-matched battle. Fighting began for a second time and, because the wind blew in the faces of the Bactrians, Artaxerxes was victorious and all of Bactria surrendered itself to him.

INARUS AND THE EGYPTIAN REVOLT

36 Egypt revolted:[95] it was a Libyan man, Inarus, and another Egyptian who led the revolt and preparations were made for war. At Inarus' request, the Athenians sent 40 ships, too. Artaxerxes planned to lead the campaign himself. When his friends advised against it, he sent Achaemaenides, his brother, with a force of 400,000 infantry and 80 ships. Inarus joined battle with Achaemenides and the Egyptians were victorious and Achaemenides was struck and killed by Inarus. And his corpse was sent to Artaxerxes. Inarus was also victorious at sea, where Charitimides, who acted as the admiral of the 40 ships from Athens, established his reputation. Of 50 Persian ships, 20 were captured along with their crews and 30 were destroyed.

37 Megabyzus was then sent to fight Inarus, taking another army of 200,000 men and 300 ships in addition to the one which had been left behind. The commander was Oriscus and, not counting the ships, the rest of the army comprised 500,000 men: for when Achaemenides died, 100,000 men perished alongside him out of the 400,000 he was leading. So there was a fierce battle and large numbers died on each side, but more Egyptians than Persians. And Megabyzus struck Inarus in the thigh and he took flight. And the Persians won a convincing victory. Inarus fled to Byblus – this is a fortified town in Egypt – and with him fled all the Greeks who had not died in the battle alongside Charmitides. With the exception of Byblus, Egypt sided with Megabyzus.

38 As it seemed that this town could not be taken, Megabyzus made a treaty with Inarus and the Greeks (of whom there were over 6,000), which stated that they would suffer no harm from the King and that the Greeks could return home whenever they wished.

He made Sarsamas satrap of Egypt, and he came to Artaxerxes with Inarus and the Greeks. And Sarsamas discovered that the King was furious with Inarus because he had killed his brother, Achaemenides. Megabyzus told him everything that had happened, including how

95 This revolt lasted from 464–454 BCE and was probably sparked by the death of Xerxes. See Briant 2002, 573–577 and Allen 2005, 101–105.

he had captured Byblus by giving assurances to Inarus and the Greeks. And he earnestly asked the King to ensure their safety and was successful. Finally it was announced to the army that Inarus and the Greeks would suffer no harm.

AMESTRIS TAKES REVENGE FOR THE DEATH OF PRINCE ACHAEMENIDES

39 Amestris was deeply vexed about her son, Achaemenides, because she had not had vengeance on Inarus and the Greeks. She asked for this from the King but he did not grant it. Then she asked for it from Megabyzus, who sent her away. Then, because she kept on bothering her son about it, she got her way. After five years she was given Inarus and the Greeks by the King. And she impaled him on three stakes; and she beheaded as many Greeks as she was able to get hold of – fifty in all.

MEGABYZUS' REVOLT IN SYRIA

40 And Megabyzus was plunged into deep grief and went into mourning. And he asked to return to his own land, Syria. He secretly sent the other Greeks there, then went himself and revolted from the King. And he amassed a powerful force – as much as 150,000, not including the cavalry [and infantry]. And Usiris was sent to fight him with 200,000 men and a battle took place in which Megabyzus and Usiris both struck each other: Usiris hit Megabyzus in the thigh with a javelin and the wound was two fingers deep and Megabyzus hit Usiris in the thigh in just the same way. Megabyzus then hit Usiris in the shoulder: he fell from his horse and Megabyzus, taking him in his arms, ordered his men to pick him up and to save his life. A large number of Persians died and Megabyzus' sons, Zopyrus and Artyphius fought bravely. Megabyzus gained a resounding victory. He looked after Usiris carefully, and, at Usiris' bidding, sent him back to Artaxerxes.

41 Menostanes, the son of Artarius, was sent to fight him with another army. Artarius was the satrap of Babylon and the brother of Artaxerxes. They fought each other and the Persian army took flight. Menostanes was struck in the shoulder by Megabyzus and was then wounded in the head by an arrow, but not fatally. He and his men took flight all the same and Megabyzus enjoyed a glorious victory.

42 Artarius sent a messenger to Megabyzus and advised him to make a treaty with the King. Megabyzus made it clear that he wanted to

make a treaty too but did not want to go to the King – rather he would only do it on condition that he could stay in his own land. The King was told this and both the Paphlagonian eunuch, Artoxares, and Amestris, too, advised him to make a peace treaty quickly. And so Artarius himself was sent, as were Amytis, Megabyzus' wife, Artoxares, who was now 20 years old, and Petesas, the father of Urisis and Spitamas. They made full assurances to Megabyzus with numerous speeches and oaths, but nevertheless had great difficulty persuading him to come to the King. When Megabyzus did return, the King finally sent him news that he was forgiven for the wrongs he had done.

THE ROYAL LION HUNT AND MEGABYZUS' EXILE

43 The King went out hunting and was attacked by a lion. Megabyzus struck the beast with a javelin as it was flying through the air and killed it. And Artaxerxes was annoyed because Megabyzus had struck it before he could hit it himself. And he ordered that Megabyzus should be beheaded. His life was spared because of the entreaties of Amestris, Amytis, and others, but he was forced to emigrate to a city by the Red Sea called Cyrta. The eunuch Artoxares was also banished to Armenia because he had often spoken to the King on Megabyzus' behalf.

Megabyzus spent five years in exile, then ran away disguised as a *pisagas*. *Pisagas* is what the Persians call lepers and nobody approaches them.[96] So he ran away and went home to Amytis and was barely recognized. And the King was reconciled with him thanks to Amestris and Amytis and made him a messmate [*homotrapezus*], as he had been before. He died at the age of 76. And the King grieved for him a good deal.

APOLLONIDES OF COS AND THE DEATH OF PRINCESS AMYTIS

44 After Megabyzus died, Amytis consorted with a lot of men, just as her mother Amestris had done before her. When Amytis was ill – albeit only mildly and not seriously – Apollonides, the doctor from Cos, who was in love with her, told her that she would recover her health if she consorted with men because she had a disease of the womb. When his plan succeeded and he started sleeping with her, the woman began to waste away and he put an end to their sexual

96 On the treatment of lepers in Persia see also Herodotus 1.138.

relations. So since she was dying she told her mother to take revenge on Apollonides. And her mother told King Artaxerxes everything: how Apollonides had been sleeping with her, how he then stopped after he had abused her, and how her daughter had asked her to take revenge on him. And he let her mother deal with the situation herself. And she took Apollonides, bound him, and punished him for two months. She then buried him alive and at this time Amytis died too.

ZOPYRUS ABSCONDS TO ATHENS

45 Zopyrus, the son of Megabyzus and Amytis, when both his mother and father died, revolted from the King. And he came to Athens, because of the good service his mother had done them. He sailed to Caunus with his followers and told the inhabitants to surrender their city. The Caunians said they would hand their city over to him, but not as yet to his Athenian followers. A Caunian, Alcides, threw a stone at Zopyrus when he was entering the city walls. And this is how Zopyrus died. His grandmother, Amestris, had the Caunian man crucified.

THE DEATHS OF AMESTRIS AND ARTAXERXES

46 And Amestris died when she was a very old woman. And Artaxerxes died after a reign of 42 years.[97]

End of book 17, beginning of book 18.

MISCELLANEOUS COMMENTS

F14a. Stephanus of Byzantium, s.v. Κυρταία

Cyrtaea: a city on the Red Sea to which Artaxerxes banished Megabyzes. Ctesias, *History of Persia*, Book Three.

F14b*. Stephanus Byzantius, s.v. Βύβλος {L}

Byblus: (. . .) there is also a Byblus on the Nile, a very secure city.

F14c*. Hesychius, Lexicon, s.v. πισσᾶται {L}

pissatai: those who have white leprosy.

97 Artaxerxes died in 424 BCE. For Amestris see also Herodotus, 7.114, 9.109–112.

BOOK 18
PERSIAN HISTORY

Reigns of Xerxes II (424 BCE), Secyndianus (424 BCE), and Darius II (Ochus) (424–404 BCE)

THE REIGNS OF XERXES II AND SECYNDIANUS

F15. Photius, p. 41b38–43b2 (§47–56)

THE ROYAL FAMILY AND THE SUCCESSION CRISIS (FROM ARTAXERXES I TO DARIUS II)

47 After the death of Artaxerxes, his son Xerxes became king, who was the only legitimate son he had by Damaspia (who passed away on the same day that Artaxerxes died).[98] Bagorazus took the corpses of both mother and father away to Persia. Artaxerxes had 17 illegitimate sons, one of whom was Secyndianus whose mother was Alogyne, a Babylonian. And there were also Ochus and Aristes, too, whose mother was Cosmartidene: also a Babylonian. And Ochus was later king, too. He had more children in addition to those already mentioned: Bagapaeus and Parysatis, whose mother was Andia: also a Babylonian. It is this Parysatis who was the mother of Artaxerxes and Cyrus. His father, when he was alive, made Ochus satrap of the Hycanians and gave him a wife, too, called Parysatis, who was the daughter of Artaxerxes and was Ochus' own sister.

THE ASSASSINATION OF XERXES II

48 Secyndianus got the eunuch Pharnacyas on his side, who after Bagorazus, Menostanes and some others, was next in importance. While Xerxes was in a drunken slumber in the palace at a festival, they entered and killed him, forty-five days after his father's death. And so it

98 Xerxes II's short reign took place in 424 BCE. For the dating and Ctesias' relationship to Babylonian sources see Briant 2002, 588–589.

happened that both corpses were taken away to Persia at the same time. The mules taking the carriage refused to move, as if they were waiting for the son's body. When it arrived, however, they set off enthusiastically.

THE ACCESSION OF SECYNDIANUS (SOGDIANOS)

49 Secyndianus became king and Menostanes became his *azabarites*.[99] And Bagorazus went away and returned to Secyndianus, and because of an old hatred which had smouldered between them the King ordered that he be stoned to death, alleging that Bagorazus had abandoned his father's corpse without his consent. The army was plunged into grief because of this. And the King gave the army gifts. But they hated him for killing his brother, Xerxes, and for killing Bagorazus.

THE ACCESSION AND REIGN OF DARIUS II

THE RISE TO POWER OF DARIUS (OCHUS) AND THE ASSASSINATION OF SECYNDIANUS

50 Secyndianus sent a message summoning Ochus. And Ochus promised to come, but did not. And the same thing happened again and again. In the end, Ochus surrounded himself with a large army and it seemed likely that he would become king. Arbarius, the commander of Secyndianus' cavalry, defected to Ochus' side. Then Arxanes, the Egyptian satrap, defected, too. And Artoxares the eunuch came from Armenia to join Ochus. And they crowned him [Ochus] with the *citaris* against his will.[100]

Ochus became king and was known by a new name, Darius (II).[101] And, on Parysatis' advice, he approached Secyndianus swearing deceitful oaths – and Menostanes advised Secyndianus time and time again not to trust his oaths and not to make a peace treaty with deceitful people. But he trusted him nevertheless and was captured and thrown into the ashes and killed after a reign of six months and fifteen days.[102]

99 Secyndianus reigned for six months in 424 BCE, after which Darius II succeeded to the throne. *Azabarites* is a transcription of the Persian word *hazarapatiš*, meaning 'leader of 1,000': the title given to the commander of the royal guard.

100 See note 60.

101 Darius II reigned from 424 to 404 BCE. See Briant 2002, 589–611.

102 According to Valerius Maximus (9.2 ext.6), this form of execution involved placing the victim on a beam over hot ashes in a high-walled room after he

THE COURT AND FAMILY OF DARIUS II

51 So Ochus, who was also called Darius, ruled alone. There were three eunuchs who held sway with him: the foremost was Artoxares, second Artibarzanes, and third Athöus. He took special account of his wife's advice, by whom he had had two children before becoming king: a daughter, Amestris, and a son, Arsacas, who was later known as Artaxerxes.[103] While she was Queen she bore him another son and named him Cyrus, after the sun. She then gave birth to Artostes and then one after another until she had thirteen children. And the historian says that he heard this from Parysatis herself. But the other children soon died and those who survived were the ones who have been mentioned already together with a fourth son, named Oxendras.

THE REVOLTS OF ARISTES AND ARTYPHIUS

52 Aristes revolted from the King – Aristes was his brother by the same father and mother – as did Artyphius, Megabyzus' son. Artasyras was sent to fight them and he made war on Artyphius. And Artasyras was worsted in two battles. And he made another attack and defeated Artyphius. And he won the Greeks with Artyphius over to his side with presents and only three Milesians were left behind with him. Eventually Artyphius received pledges and oaths from Artasyras, and since Arsites was nowhere to be seen, he surrendered himself to the King.

Parysatis advised the King, who was plotting Artyphius' death, not to kill him right away, because this could be used as a trick to elicit Aristes' submission. And she said that once Aristes had been tricked and captured too, the two of them should then be killed. And this is what happened, her plan coming to fruition. Artyphius and Aristes were thrown in the ashes.[103] The King did not want to kill Aristes, though, but partly by persuasion, partly by force, Parysatis saw to it that he was killed. And Pharnacyas who, along with Secyndianus, had killed Xerxes was also stoned to death. Menostanes killed himself when he was being taken off to be killed.

PISUTHNES' REVOLT

53 Pisuthnes revolted and Tissaphernes was sent to fight him as were Spithradates and Parmises. Pisuthnes went out to meet him with

had been well fed and watered. When he finally succumbed to sleep the victim would fall and be burnt to death.

103 Photius favours the spelling Arsacas, whereas Plutarch calls him Arsicas. See p. 9 and F15a.

Lycon the Athenian and the Greeks he was commanding. The King's generals bribed Lycon and the Greeks to come over to their side and they revolted from Pisuthnes. They then gave and received pledges from Pisthunes and brought him before the King. But the King threw him in the ashes and gave Pisthunes' satrapy to Tissaphernes. For his act of betrayal, Lycon received cities and lands.

THE PLOT OF ARTOXARES THE EUNUCH

54 Artoxares the eunuch, who was very influential with the King, plotted against the King because he wished to rule himself. As he was a eunuch he ordered a woman to procure a moustache and beard for him so he could look like a man. She informed against him and he was arrested and handed over to Parysatis. And he was killed.

THE REVOLT OF TERITUCHMES

55 Arsaces, the King's son, who was later known by a new name, Artaxerxes, married Idernes' daughter, Stateira. Idernes' son also married the King's daughter. The daughter was Amestris and the name of her bridegroom Terituchmes, who, after his father's death, was appointed satrap in his place.

He had a sister by the same father, Rhoxane, who was beautiful to look at and an extremely experienced archer and javelin-thrower. Terituchmes was in love with her and hated being with Amestris. And eventually he resolved to throw Amestris into a sack and to have her pierced through by 300 men with whom he also planned a revolt. But someone called Udiastes, who was influential with Terituchmes, received a letter from the King promising him numerous things if his daughter were saved. He attacked and killed Terituchmes, who during the uprising had behaved in a noble and manly way and had killed a large number of men: they say he had killed up to thirty-seven.

THE EXECUTION OF THE FAMILY OF TERITUCHMES; STATEIRA IS SAVED

56 Mitradates, the son of Udiastes, who was Terituchmes' shield-bearer, was not there, but when he learnt what had happened he called down many curses on his father, seized the city of Zaris, and kept it under guard for Terituchmes' son. Parysatis gave orders for Terituchmes' mother, his brothers, Mitrostes and Helicus, and two of his

sisters – Stateira was not included – to be buried alive and for Rhoxane to be hacked to pieces while still alive. And this is what happened.

The King told his wife, Parysatis, to do the same to Stateira, the wife of his son, Arsaces. But Arsaces mollified his mother and father greatly with tearful lamentations and since Parysatis was moved, Ochus (Darius) gave way too, but told Parysatis that she would really regret it one day. End of Book 18.

THE FAMILY AND NAMES OF ARTAXERXES II AND CYRUS THE YOUNGER

F15a. Plutarch, *Artaxerxes*, 1.2–4 {cf. Testimonium 11d}

2 For Darius and Parysatis had four children: the eldest was Artaxerxes, after him Cyrus, and the youngest were Ostanes and Oxathres.

3 Cyrus took his name from Cyrus the Elder, who they say was named after the sun (for the Persians call the sun 'Cyrus').

4 Artaxerxes was initially called Arsicas – although Dinon says that he was called Oarses. But even if Ctesias has injected all sorts of incredible, meandering stories into his books, it is hardly likely that he did not know the name of the king at whose court he lived and for whom he cared, along with his wife, mother, and children.

ARISCAS (ARTAXERXES) SAVES HIS WIFE FROM THE MASSACRE OF HER FAMILY

F15b*. Plutarch, *Artaxerxes*, 2.2 {L}

On his parents' orders, [Arsicas] took a beautiful and noble wife and stayed married to her despite their opposition. After killing her brother, the King plotted to kill her as well and Arsicas supplicated his mother lamenting his fate a great deal and, albeit with difficulty, persuaded her neither to kill the woman nor to take her away from him.

BOOKS 19–20
PERSIAN HISTORY

Early reign of Artaxerxes II (404–359/8 BCE)

THE ACCESSION OF ARTAXERXES II AND REBELLION OF CYRUS THE YOUNGER

F16. Photius, p. 43b3–44a19 (§57–67)

THE DEATH OF DARIUS II AND THE ACCESSION OF ARTAXERXES II

57 In Book 19 of his history, he sets out how Ochus (Darius) fell ill in Babylon and died after a reign of 35 years.[104] Arsacas became king and was known by the name Artaxerxes.[105]

THE REVENGE OF STATEIRA

58 And Udiastes had his tongue cut out: it was pulled out backwards and he died. His son, Mitradates, was appointed satrap in his place. This was all brought about at Stateira's insistence. And Parysatis was distressed.

CYRUS PREPARES FOR HIS REBELLION

59 Cyrus was slanderously misrepresented to his brother, Artaxerxes, by Tissaphernes and he fled to their mother, Parysatis, and was cleared of the accusations. Dishonoured by his brother, Cyrus went away to his own satrapy and planned an uprising.

104 Darius II died in 404 BCE. See p. 10.
105 Artaxerxes II (Arsicas) ruled from 404–359/8 BCE. For the reign see Briant 2002, 612–680.

COURT INTRIGUES

60 Satibarzanes slandered Orondes, alleging that he was sleeping with Parysatis, although Parysatis was extremely chaste. And Orondes was killed. And the King's mother grew angry with the King.

61 And he says that Parysatis killed Terituchmes' son with poison.

62 And he talks about the man who burnt his father's corpse contrary to all custom. Because of this he reproaches Hellanicus and Herodotus as liars.

CYRUS THE YOUNGER'S REBELLION

63 Cyrus' revolt from his brother, the assembly of the Hellenic and barbarian armies and Clearchus as general of the Greeks. He relates how Syennis, the King of the Cilicians, fought for both Cyrus and Artaxerxes. And how Cyrus encouraged his own army and how Artaxerxes encouraged his. Clearchus the Spartan, who was the Greek leader, and Menon the Thessalian, who were both on Cyrus' side, always disagreed with each other because Cyrus consulted Clearchus about everything, whereas Menon's opinion counted for nothing with him.

A large number of men deserted from Artaxerxes' to Cyrus' side, but no one deserted Cyrus for Artaxerxes. For this reason Arbarius, who planned to go over to Cyrus' side, was informed against and thrown into the ashes.

THE BATTLE OF CUNAXA AND THE DEATH OF PRINCE CYRUS

64 Cyrus' attack on the King's army and Cyrus' victory. But also the death of Cyrus because he disobeyed Clearchus.[106] And the mutilation of Cyrus' corpse by his brother, Artaxerxes. Artaxerxes himself cut off his head and the hand with which he had struck him and paraded them in triumph.

65 Departure of Clearchus the Spartan and the Greeks who were with him during the night and capture of one of the cities held by Parysatis. Then the King's treaty with the Greeks.

106 The events being described are those of the Battle of Cunaxa in 401 BCE, where Clearchus was in command of the Greek mercenaries that formed Cyrus' right flank. See p. 16.

PARYSATIS' REVENGE AND ARTAXERXES' REWARDS

66 He relates how Parysatis arrived in Babylon mourning Cyrus and how she eventually recovered his head and hand only and buried him and went away to Susa. He tells the story of Bagapates, who had cut the head off Cyrus' body under orders from the King. He relates how his mother played dice with the King staking bets, and how she won and took Bagapates as her prize. And he relates the way in which Bagapates was flayed alive and how he was crucified by Parysatis. And he talks about the time when her considerable grief for Cyrus ended following Artaxerxes' repeated requests.
67 And how Artaxerxes gave gifts to the man who brought him Cyrus' horse blanket and how Artaxerxes held in esteem the Carian who he thought had struck Cyrus. And how Parysatis was maltreated and killed the esteemed Carian. And how, when she asked, Artaxerxes handed over to Parysatis Mitradates who, at dinner, had proudly boasted about killing Cyrus. And she took him and subjected him to a painful death. These events are in Books 19 and 20 of the history.

CYRUS' HOPES AND AMBITIONS AND HIS FIRST OPPOSITION TO HIS BROTHER

F17. Plutarch, *Artaxerxes*, 2.3–3.6

2.3 Their mother [Parysatis] loved Cyrus more [than Arsicas, i.e. Artaxerxes] and wanted him to be king. And so when their father was lying ill, Cyrus was sent for from the coast and made his journey inland in the full hope that his mother would have arranged for him to be designated successor to the throne.
4 And Parysatis had a specious argument – which Cyrus the Elder had also employed at Demaratus' instruction – that she had given birth to Arsicas when Darius had no special status, but to Cyrus when Darius was king.
5 Her argument was unsuccessful, however, and the older son was made king under the new name of Artaxerxes; Cyrus on the other hand was appointed satrap of Lydia and general of the coastal provinces.

3.1 A little after the death of Darius, the King set out for Pasargade to receive his royal initiation at the hands of the Persian priests.
2 There is a temple of a war goddess that one might compare to Athena. The initiate must enter this, take off his own clothes and put on those worn by Cyrus the Elder before he became king; he must eat some fig cake, chew some terebinth wood, and drink a

cup of sour milk. No one else knows whether or not they perform any other rites in addition to these.

3 When Artaxerxes was about to perform these rites, Tissaphernes came up to him bringing one of the priests who – because he had been in charge of Cyrus' traditional education during his childhood and had taught him to be a Magus – was, it seemed, more upset than any other Persian when Cyrus had not been made king.[107] Because of this he was trusted when he started making accusations against Cyrus.

4 He accused him of planning to lie in wait in the sanctuary so as to attack and kill the King when he was removing his clothes.

5 Some say that this false charge resulted in Cyrus' arrest, others that Cyrus entered the sanctuary and was handed over by the priest when he was found hiding.

6 And when he was about to be killed, his mother put her arms around him, entwining her locks of hair around him and pressing her neck against his. And with much wailing and cries of entreaty she pleaded with the King and sent Cyrus back to the sea. But Cyrus was not content with his position and, since it was not his release that he remembered but his arrest, his anger made him crave the kingship even more than before.

THE PLACE OF BATTLE AND CLEARCHUS' ADVICE TO CYRUS

F18. Plutarch, *Artaxerxes*, 8.2

And so the place in which they drew up for battle was called Cunaxa, which was 500 stades away from Babylon.[108] And they say that before the battle, when Clearchus was telling him to stay behind the battle line and not to put himself in any danger, Cyrus said, 'What are you saying, Clearchus? Are you telling me, a man who longs for the kingship, to act unworthily of the kingship?'

THE DUEL BETWEEN ARTAGERSES AND CYRUS

F19. Plutarch, *Artaxerxes*, 9

9.1 For the Greeks were able to claim as large a victory as they wished over the barbarians and advanced a long way in pursuit. Cyrus,

107 At this time Tissaphernes was satrap of Ionia.

108 The Battle of Cunaxa was fought on September 3, 401 BCE. See Dandamanev 1989, 274–285.

riding a thoroughbred horse that was hard-mouthed and unruly – called Pasacas, according to Ctesias – was attacked by Artagerses, leader of the Cadusians, who was loudly shouting:

2 'You who disgrace the most beautiful of Persian names, Cyrus, most unjust and most foolish of men! You have travelled a wicked road, bringing many wicked Greeks in pursuit of good Persian things and hoping to kill your master and brother, who has a million slaves better than you. You will have proof of this right away: for you will lose your head right here before you get to see the King's face.'

3 With these words he threw his spear at him. But Cyrus' breastplate stoutly resisted but whilst he was not wounded, he *was* sent quivering by the strength of the blow. After Artagerses had turned his horse away, Cyrus happened to strike him and pierced him through the top of his neck near the collar bone.

4 And so nearly everyone agrees that Artagerses was killed by Cyrus. As far as Cyrus' death is concerned, though, since Xenophon gives only a simple and concise account because he was not there, perhaps there is nothing to prevent me from relating the versions of Dinon and then Ctesias in turn.

THE DEATH OF CYRUS AND THE KING'S VICTORY

F20. Plutarch, *Artaxerxes*, 11–13 {cf. Testimonia 6a and 14b}

11.1 The narrative of Ctesias, to cut a long story short, goes something like this. After killing Artagerses, Cyrus rode his horse towards the King himself and the King towards him, both in silence. Cyrus' friend, Ariaeus, struck the King first but did not wound him.

2 The King threw his spear and whilst he did not hit Cyrus, he did strike and kill Satiphernes, a noble man and trusted friend of Cyrus. Cyrus launched his spear at the King and wounded him in the chest through his breastplate, with the spear entering to a depth of two fingers; and under the force of the blow he fell off his horse.

3 Those around him were in uproar and took to flight, but {the King} got up and along with a few others – Ctesias among them – occupied a nearby hill and laid low. Cyrus was spiritedly carried far off by his horse into the midst of the enemy, and as it was already dark he was neither recognized by his enemies nor found by his friends when they went in search of him.

4 Buoyed up by his victory and full of eagerness and courage, Cyrus rode through his forces shouting, 'Out of the way, you pitiable lot!' He shouted this a number of times in Persian, and the soldiers got

out of his way and prostrated themselves, but at the same time his tiara slipped from his head.

5 And a young Persian man called Mithradates ran up and struck him in the temple near his eye, unaware of who he was. The wound bled profusely and as a result Cyrus felt stunned and dizzy and fell down.

6 His horse ran off and wandered around and an attendant of the man who had struck Cyrus seized its felt saddle-cloth, which was saturated with blood.

7 As for Cyrus, who was struggling with difficulty to recover from his wound, some nearby eunuchs were trying to mount him on another horse in an attempt to save his life.

8 He wanted to walk by himself, but as he was in a frail condition, they supported him and led him along. He was staggering and tottering as if drunk, and thought that he was victorious since he could hear the fugitives calling Cyrus their king and begging him to spare their lives.

9 Meanwhile some Caunians – poor men who lived a hard life following the King's army – had fallen in with some of Cyrus' party thinking them to be allies. When they eventually noticed that the men's breastplate tunics were purple – whereas all the royal ones were white – they realized that they were amongst the enemy.

10 And so one of them – although unaware of who Cyrus was – plucked up the courage to strike him from behind with a spear. The vein in the back of his leg ruptured and Cyrus fell to the ground, striking his wounded temple on a stone at the same time, and died.

11 Such is story of Ctesias, in which he does kill the man, but takes his time killing him, as if with a blunt sword.

12.1 When he was already dead, Artasyras, the King's Eye, happened to ride past on a horse.[109] And so when he discovered the eunuchs in mourning, he asked the most trustworthy of them, 'Who is this man beside whom you sit mourning, Pariscas?' And he said, 'Can't you see, Artasyras, that Cyrus is dead?'

2 Amazed, Artasyras told the eunuch to take heart and keep the corpse safe and hurried off to Artaxerxes (who by now had resigned himself to events and was in a poor state physically, suffering as he was from thirst and his wound) and took delight in telling him that he had personally seen Cyrus dead.

109 The King's Eye was the official in charge of inspection in the Empire's provinces (satrapies): Herodotus 1.114, Aristophanes, *Acharnians*, 61–129. See Balcer 1987 on old Persian terms for the King's Eye: *Spasaka*.

3 At first the King was keen to go there in person and told Artasyras to take him to the place. But since there was much talk about the Greeks and fear that they would come in pursuit, carry the day and gain control, he decided to send a sizeable number of men on a reconnaissance mission. And thirty men were dispatched with torches.
4 Since the King was close to dying from thirst, Satibarzanes the eunuch ran around looking for something for him to drink. For there was no water in the place and the camp was nowhere nearby.
5 He finally came across one of those poor Caunian men who had some dirty, polluted water in a shabby wine-skin – about eight cotylae in all.[110] And taking this, he brought it to the King and gave it to him.
6 When he had drunk it all down the eunuch asked if he had not been completely disgusted with the drink. And the King swore by the gods that neither wine nor the lightest, purest water had ever given him so much pleasure to drink, 'So much so,' he said, 'that if I am unable to find and reward the man who gave it to me, I pray that the gods make him happy and rich.'
13.1 In the meantime the thirty men rode up, beaming with joy and delight, with reports of his unexpected good fortune. His confidence had already been boosted by the large numbers of men who had hurried back to him and had massed together, and he came down the hill lit by torches on every side.
2 When he was standing over the corpse and – in accordance with a Persian custom – the right hand and head was cut off the body, he ordered the head to be brought to him. And seizing the hair, which was long and shaggy, he showed it to those who were still wavering and deserting.
3 And they prostrated themselves before him in amazement, the result being that he was soon surrounded by 70,000 men who marched back into the camp with him.

CYRUS WOUNDS ARTAXERXES

F21. Xenophon, *Anabasis*, I.8.26–27 [cf. Testimonium 6aβ]

26 (. . .) [Cyrus] strikes [Artaxerxes] on his chest and wounds him through his breastplate, as Ctesias the doctor says – who also says that he healed the wound.

110 Eight cotylae is just over 2 litres (about 4 British/Imperial pints and just over 5 US liquid pints).

27 (. . .) Ctesias relates how many of the King's entourage died; for he was with him.

THE NUMBERS OF SOLDIERS AND A TALLY OF THE DEAD

F22. Plutarch, *Artaxerxes*, 13.3–4 {cf. Testimonium 6aγ}

13 (. . .) He had marched out into battle, Ctesias says, with 400,000 men. But Dinon, Xenophon, and their like say that many more men fought.

4 As for the number of corpses, Ctesias says that 9,000 were brought to Artaxerxes; but it seemed to him that the dead numbered at least 20,000.

CTESIAS AND THE EMBASSY TO PHALINUS

F23. Plutarch, *Artaxerxes*, 13.4–7 {cf. Testimonium 6aβ}

4 (. . .) This is therefore a disputed point.

5 It is a manifest lie on the part of Ctesias to say that he was sent to the Greeks with Phalinus the Zacynthian and some others.

6 Xenophon knew that Ctesias had spent time with the King: for he mentions him and has clearly read his works. And so if Ctesias had gone along as an interpreter of conversations as important as these, he would not have failed to mention his name – whereas he *does* name Phalinus the Zacythian.

7 But unfortunately it seems that Ctesias is self-promoting and no less partial towards Sparta and Clearchus: he always gives himself plenty of space in his narrative which he uses to mention Clearchus' and Sparta's many fine characteristics.

PARYSATIS LEARNS OF THE DEATH OF PRINCE CYRUS

F24. Demetrius, *On Style*, §216 {cf. Testimonium 14a}

Here is another example of this. One should not relate events all at once but gradually, keeping the listener in suspense and forcing them to share in the anxiety. This is what Ctesias does in the announcement of Cyrus' death. For the messenger comes but does not tell Parysatis straightaway that Cyrus has died – this is what is called a 'Scythian discourse' – rather, he first announced that he was winning and she was pleased and worried. Afterwards she asks, 'How is the King faring?' And he says that he has taken flight. And she retorts, 'Yes, it is Tissaphernes who is responsible for what has happened to him.'

And she asks again, 'Where is Cyrus now?' And the messenger replies, 'In the place where brave men have to camp.' Continuing with difficulty, gradually and bit by bit, he finally blurted it out, as they say – thus showing very expressively and vividly that the messenger was reporting the disaster against his will and throwing both his mother and the listener into anguish.

F25. Aspines, *Art of Rhetoric*, 10.38

What also arouses pity is a speech concerning the possessions of the dead, as Ctesias has described Cyrus' mother as delivering when she speaks about his horses, dogs, and arms; and by these means he rouses pity.

REWARDS AND PUNISHMENTS POST CUNAXA

F26. Plutarch, *Artaxerxes*, 14–17[cf. Testimonium 6b]

14.1 After the battle [the King] sent very fine and extravagant gifts to the son of Artagerses – the man who had been killed by Cyrus – and rewarded Ctesias and the others well.

2 And he found the Caunian who had given him the wine-skin [full of water] and raised him from obscurity and poverty to a position of honour and wealth.

3 A certain amount of care was taken over the punishment of those who had done him wrong. For example, one Mede called Arbaces who had defected to Cyrus during the battle, but who had come back to the King's side after Cyrus' death, was charged with cowardice and weakness rather than treachery and malice and was ordered to place a naked prostitute astride his neck and carry her round the market-place for an entire day.

4 As for another man who, in addition to defecting, had falsely claimed to have killed two of the enemy, the King ordered his tongue to be pierced through by three needles.

5 Since he believed that he had killed Cyrus himself – and wanted everyone to think and say the same – he sent gifts to Mithradates, who had been the first to strike Cyrus, and told their bearers to say, 'The King gives you these as a reward for finding Cyrus' felt saddle-cloth and bringing it to him.'

6 When the Carian who had struck the hollow of Cyrus' knee, forcing him to fall, asked for gifts, he told their bearers to say, 'The King gives you these as second prize for reporting good news. For Artasyras was the first to report the death of Cyrus and after him you.'

7 Although despondent, Mithridates went away in silence. But out of stupidity, the Carian let a perfectly ordinary feeling get the better of him.
8 For he was corrupted, it seems, by his current good fortune and persuaded to lay claim to things which were beyond him. He did not accept the gifts as a reward for reporting good news, and was indignant, calling for witnesses and shouting that it was he himself and no one else who had killed Cyrus and that he was being unjustly deprived of his glory.
9 When the King heard this he became very annoyed and ordered the man to be beheaded. But his mother who was present said, 'Don't you let this wretched Carian off like this, my King! He shall receive his reward for what he has dared to say from me instead.'
10 The King turned him over and Parysatis ordered the executioners to seize the man and put him on the rack for ten days, then to gouge out his eyes and pour molten bronze into his ears until he died.

15.1 A short time later Mithridates also came to a bad end through a similar act of stupidity. For having been invited to a dinner which the King's and the King's Mother's eunuchs were also attending, he came adorned in gold and clothing which the King had given him.
2 And when they got to drinking, the most powerful of Parysatis' eunuchs said to him, 'What beautiful clothing this is, Mithridates, that the King has given you – and what beautiful neck-chains and bracelets! And what an expensive sword![111] He has made you a truly blessed man, admired by all.'
3 And Mithridates who was already drunk said, 'What about these things, Sparamizes? I showed myself worthy of bigger and more beautiful things from the King for my actions that day.'
4 And smiling at him Sparamizes said, 'No one begrudges you them, Mithridates, but since, as the Greeks say, there is truth in wine: in what way, my friend, is it a great or noble achievement to find a felt saddle-cloth that has slipped off a horse and to bring it to the King?'
5 He was not unaware of the truth but, because he wished to expose the man to the company, said this to stir up his vanity at a point when the wine had made him talkative and his guard was down.
6 And so he spoke without restraint: 'You lot can say what you like about saddle-cloths and other nonsense; but I tell you distinctly that Cyrus was killed by *this* hand. For I did not throw my spear idly

111 The reference is to a particular type of short Persian sword, an *akīnakēs*.

and in vain like Artagerses: I struck and pierced his temple, only just missing his eye, and brought the man down. And it was from *that* wound that he died.'

7 And so the others, already seeing Mithridates' misfortune and death, bent their heads to the ground. But their host said, 'Mithridates, my friend, for now let us eat and drink to the King's good fortune and leave to one side subjects that are too big for us.'

16.1 Afterwards, the eunuch told Parysatis the story and she told the King. And the King grew angry as if he were being exposed and robbed of the most noble and sweetest part of his victory.

2 For he wanted all the barbarians and Greeks to believe that while fighting in close combat in the course of his expeditions he had both given and received a blow – and that whilst he *had* been wounded himself, he had also killed his adversary. And so he ordered that Mithridates be put to death by the Torture of the Boats.

3 The Torture of the Boats is performed as follows. They take two boats that have been made to fit on top of each other and make the man who is to be punished lie down in one on his back.

4 They then put the other boat on top and fasten it so that the man's head, hands, and feet are left projecting outside and the rest of his body is entirely concealed, and they give the man food – and if he is uncooperative they force him to eat by pricking his eyes. Once he has eaten, they give him a mixture of milk and honey to drink and pour it both into his mouth and all over his face.

5 Then they keep turning him so that he is constantly facing the sun and swarms of flies come and sit on his face, completely covering it.

6 And since he performs the bodily functions that men who eat and drink have to perform, maggots and worms swarm out of the excrement, which decays and putrefies and these pass into the body and consume it from the inside.

7 For when the man is clearly dead and the upper boat is removed they can see that the flesh has been completely eaten away and that around the entrails swarms of these animals are feeding and clinging fast. After being consumed in this way for 17 days, Mithridates finally died.

17.1 The one object that remained in Parysatis' sights was the man who had cut off Cyrus' head and hand: Masabates, the King's eunuch.

2 And so since he gave her no way of getting a hold on him, Parysatis devised a plot of the following kind.

3 She was a naturally intelligent woman in all respects and a formidable dice-player. For this reason she had often played dice with the King before the war.

4 She became reconciled with him after the war and, rather than fleeing his affections, she began playing with him again and even cooperated in his erotic adventures, assisting him by her presence. All in all, she left him little opportunity to speak and spend time with Stateira since Parysatis truly hated her more than anyone and wanted to exercise the most influence over the King herself.

5 One day Parysatis, catching Artaxerxes with nothing to do and beginning to roam idly about, challenged him to a game of dice with a stake of 1,000 darics. And she saw to it that he won at the game and she handed over the gold. Pretending that she was annoyed and keen to get her own back, she suggested another game, the stake this time being a eunuch. And the King consented.

6 They agreed that each of them could exclude their five most trusted eunuchs, but from the rest, the winner could choose whoever they liked and the loser would hand him over: these were the conditions of their dice game.

7 Parysatis applied herself in earnest to the game and played with determination and, since the dice also seemed to fall in her favour, she won and claimed Masabates: for he was not amongst the eunuchs that Artaxerxes had excluded. And before the King's suspicions were aroused, she personally handed him over to the executioners whom she ordered to flay him alive, impale his body sideways on three stakes, and separately peg out his stretched-out skin.

8 When this was done, the King found it intolerable and was angry with her, but she feigned ignorance and with a smile said, 'How sweet you are! Happy for you that you get angry on account of a useless old eunuch! I, on the other hand, lost 1,000 darics at dice, and have accepted my loss and not said a word.'

9 And so the King, although he regretted being deceived like this, held his tongue. But Stateira openly opposed her in other matters and was particularly disapproving of the fact that, because of Cyrus, she was brutally and lawlessly killing eunuchs and other men who were loyal to the King.

BOOKS 21–23
PERSIAN HISTORY

Later reign of Artaxerxes II (404–359/8 BCE); List of distances; List of kings

THE LATER REIGN OF ARTAXERXES II

F27. Photius p. 44a20–b19 (§68–71) {cf. Testimonium 7a}

TISSAPHERNES CAPTURES THE GREEK COMMANDERS

68 In Books 21, 22, and 23, which is the end of the whole history, are included the following events. He relates how Tissaphernes plotted against the Greeks and became friendly with Menon, the Thessalian with whose help he won over Clearchus and the other generals with deceitful oaths, although Clearchus foresaw what would happen and tried to foil the plot. But the majority were taken in by Menon and forced Clearchus against his will to go to Tissaphernes; and Proxenus the Boeotian, already taken in by the deceit, joined the rest in approving this course of action.

THE DEATH OF CLEARCHUS AND THE OTHER COMMANDERS

69 He relates how he sent Clearchus and the others away to Artaxerxes in Babylon in chains. And everyone crowded together to see Clearchus. And Ctesias relates how he was himself Parysatis' doctor and how, on her request, he performed a number of beneficial services and treatments for Clearchus when he was in prison. And Parysatis would have released him and let him go if Stateira had not persuaded her husband Artaxerxes to kill him. And Clearchus was killed. And something portentous happened to his body: a strong wind blew and all by itself a grave-mound of considerable height appeared on top of it. And all the Greeks who had been sent with him were killed apart from Menon.

PARYSATIS POISONS STATEIRA

70 Parysatis' insults against Stateira and the latter's death by poison, accomplished in the following way (because Stateira took extreme care to avoid what eventually happened to her). One side of a knife was smeared with poison, the other not. A small bird, the size of an egg, was cut with this knife (the Persians call the bird a *rhyndace*). It was cut in two and Parysatis herself took and ate the half that was free from poison and offered the poisoned half to Stateira. Since she saw Parysatis, who had given this to her, eating the other half, Stateira could have no suspicion and ate the fatal poison. Anger of the King towards his mother for this and the arrest of her eunuchs and their torture and death. And the arrest of Ginge, as well, who was Parysatis' close friend. And her trial; and her acquittal by the judges but her conviction by the King; and Ginge's torture and death.[112] And Parysatis' anger towards her son for this and his towards his mother.

THE TOMB OF CLEARCHUS

71 And for eight years Clearchus' burial mound appeared to be full of date palms, which Parysatis had secretly been getting her eunuchs to bury ever since the time of his death.

THE CAPTURE OF THE GREEK COMMANDERS AND THE DEATH OF CLEARCHUS

F28. Plutarch, *Artaxerxes*, 18 {cf. Testimonia 7aβ and 15b}

1 After Tissaphernes had utterly deceived Clearchus and the other generals, acting contrary to the oaths he had sworn, and had seized them and sent them up to the King bound in shackles, Ctesias says that Clearchus asked him to supply him with a comb.

2 And he says that after receiving it and tending to his hair he was delighted with the service Ctesias had rendered him and gave him a ring to wear as a symbol of friendship to his relations and household in Sparta. The seal on the ring showed Caryatids dancing.

3 The supplies that were sent to Clearchus were taken and consumed by the shackled soldiers who gave little of them to Clearchus.

112 This woman is called Gigis by Plutarch. For poisoning at the Persian Court, see Xenophon, *Cyropaedia* 8.8.14. See also Aelian, *History of Animals*, 4.41, citing Ctesias.

Ctesias says that he righted this situation by arranging for more supplies to be sent to Clearchus and for further supplies to be given separately to the soldiers. He says that he performed these services and provided these supplies with the approval and understanding of Parysatis.

4 As there was a leg of ham amongst the supplies sent to him each day, Clearchus made appeals to Ctesias, instructing him to send him a small knife by hiding it inside the meat and not to allow his fate to depend on the King's cruelty. But Ctesias was unwilling to comply through fear.

5 But the King agreed to his mother's entreaties and swore not to kill Clearchus. But he was further persuaded by Stateira and put them all to death with the exception of Menon.

6 [Ctesias says that] after this Parysatis plotted against Stateira and prepared for her to be poisoned. But what he says is not likely, and the motive is not very well thought through, if he is claiming that Parysatis performed such a wicked act and ran such risks because of Clearchus, daring to kill the legitimate wife of the King, his partner in rearing children to inherit the throne.

7 Rather, it is clear that he exaggerates Clearchus' renown, turning the episode into a tragic drama. Moreover he says after the other generals had been put to death they were torn to pieces by dogs and birds, but that a whirlwind brought a large pile of earth and heaped it in a mound covering Clearchus' body.

8 Several dates were scattered there and after a short time an amazing grove grew up and shaded the place, the result being that the King very much regretted having killed Clearchus, a man loved by the gods.

THE DATE OF THE POISONING OF STATEIRA

F29a. Plutarch, *Artaxerxes*, 6.9 [cf. Testimonium 11e]

Although Dinon has stated that her plot [i.e. Parysatis' plot to kill Stateira] was carried out during the war, Ctesias says it was carried out later; and it is hardly likely that Ctesias was ignorant of the timing since he was there when it happened, nor did he have any reason deliberately to relocate the event in his narrative from the time when it occurred. Despite the fact that his story often deviates from the truth and veers towards the legendary and dramatic, this event must occupy the place that he gave it.

THE POISONING OF STATEIRA

F29b. Plutarch, *Artaxerxes*, 19

19.1 And so Parysatis, who had felt hatred and jealousy towards Stateira from the very beginning, seeing that her own influence with the King stemmed from the respect and esteem he felt for her, but that Stateira's influence – based on love and trust – was steadfast and secure, plotted against her, playing for what in her opinion were the highest possible stakes.

2 She had a trusted servant called Gigis who held great influence with her:[113] Dinon says that she helped in the poisoning, Ctesias only that she was unwillingly in on the secret. Ctesias says the man who procured the poison was called Belitaras, whereas Dinon says it was Melantas.

3 After their former suspicion of each other and their differences, although they had begun to frequent the same places again and to dine together, their mutual fear and caution nevertheless led them to eat the same food as each other served on the same dishes.

4 The Persians have a small bird, every part of which can be eaten since it is entirely full of fat inside – and for this reason they think that this animal feeds on air and dew. It is called a *rhyntaces*.

5 Ctesias says that Parysatis cut a bird of this kind in two with a small knife smeared with poison on one side, thus wiping the poison off on just one part of the bird. And she put the undefiled, clean part in her mouth and ate it, but gave the poisoned half to Stateira.

6 Dinon says that it was not Parysatis but Melantas who did the cutting with the knife and gave the poisoned meat to Stateira.

7 And so this woman died in convulsions and in considerable agony. And she was herself conscious of the evil that had befallen her and made her suspicions about his mother known to the King, who was aware of his mother's brutal nature and implacability.

8 For this reason he set out in search of his mother's servants and attendants at table, arrested them, and tortured them. Parysatis kept Gigis at home with her for a long time and she would not surrender her when the King asked, but when Gigis later asked for leave to go home at night, the King got wind of this, set an ambush, seized her, and condemned her to death.

9 In Persia the law prescribes that poisoners be killed in the following way: there is a broad stone on which they place the

113 Photius calls this woman Ginge. See note 112.

poisoners' heads and with another stone they pound and crush until their face and head are mashed to a pulp.

10 So it was like this that Gigis died and Artaxerxes neither reproached nor harmed Parysatis in any other way, but sent her to Babylon in accordance with her wishes, saying that so long as she lived, he would not see Babylon again. And so this was the state of affairs in the King's household.

THE BIRD CALLED THE RHYNDACE

F29c*. Hesychius, *Lexicon*, s.v. ῥυνδάκη {L}

rhyndace: a bird the size of a pigeon.

NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN EVAGORAS AND ARTAXERXES

F30. Photius, p. 44b20–42 (§72–75) {cf. Testimonium 7c}

72 {Ctesias writes about} the reasons why King Artaxerxes was in dispute with Evagoras, the King of Salamis. And Evagoras' messengers to Ctesias in order to recover the letters from Abulites. And Ctesias' letter to him about reconciling with Anaxagoras, the Cypriot King. The arrival in Cyprus of the messengers from Evagoras and the return to Evagoras of Ctesias' letters.

NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN CONON AND ARTAXERXES

73 And Conon's speech to Evagoras about going to the King; and Evagoras' letter about the things that he had requested. And Conon's letter to Ctesias. And the tribute paid to the King by Evagoras. And the return of the letters to Ctesias. Ctesias' speech to the King about Conon and the letter sent to him. The return to Satibarnazes of the gifts from Evagoras and the arrival of the messengers who had been sent to Cyprus. And Conon's letter to the King and Ctesias.

CTESIAS TAKES LETTERS TO THE SPARTANS AND TO CONON

74 And how the messengers from Sparta who had been sent to the King were placed under observation.[114] The King's letters to Conon

114 See note 9.

and the Spartans, which Ctesias took himself. How Conon was made admiral by Pharnabazus.

CTESIAS LEAVES PERSIA

75 Ctesias' arrival in his homeland, Cnidus, and in Sparta. And the trial in Rhodes of the Spartan messengers and their acquittal.

THE DANCER ZENON OF CRETE

F31. Athenaeus, I.40 p. 22c

Famous dancers: (. . .) Zenon of Crete, the most beloved by far in Artaxerxes' eyes, according to Ctesias.

CTESIAS' ROLE IN NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN ARTAXERXES AND CONON

F32. Plutarch, *Artaxerxes*, 21.1–4 {cf. Testimonium 7d}

21.1 [The King] banished the Spartans from the sea, using Conon the Athenian as his admiral along with Pharnabazus. For Conon had been living in Cyprus after the naval battle at Aegospotami,[115] not content merely with being safe, but waiting for a change in the situation, as one might wait for a change in the wind at sea.

2 And since he saw that he was in need of a military force to fulfil his ambitions and that the King's forces were in need of a sensible man, he sent a letter to the King about what he was planning.

3 And he ordered the man carrying this letter to deliver it through the intermediary of Zeno of Crete or Polycritus the Mendaean (Zeno was a dancer and Polycritus a doctor) – but if these men were not there, through the intermediary of Ctesias, the doctor.

4 Ctesias is said to have taken the letter and to have added to Conon's orders a request to send him Ctesias as well, on the grounds that he would be useful when it came to naval matters. But Ctesias says that the King himself bestowed this duty on him of his own accord.

115 The Battle of Aegospotami took place in 405 BCE, after which the Athenian general Conon went into self-imposed exile.

LIST OF DISTANCES AND LIST OF KINGS

DISTANCES FROM WEST TO EAST

F33. Photius, p. 45a1–4 (§76)

Calculation of the staging-posts, and distances in days-journeys and parasangs from Ephesus to Bactra and India.[116] List of kings from Ninus and Semiramis to Artaxerxes, and with this the end.

DATES IN PERSIAN HISTORY

F33a. *Scholia on the* Panathenaicum *of Aristides*, p. 310–311 Dindorf

There is mention of five Empires . . .[117] The first is that of the Assyrians which lasted 1450 years from Ninus, the first king, until Sardanapallus, the last king. The second is that of the Medes which lasted 470 years (Herodotus says 128) from the first king, Arbaces, until Astyages, who ruled last. The third is that of the Persians, which lasted 215 years from Cyrus, the son of Cambyses, until Artaxerxes, the son of Darius. Ctesias chronicles the periods up to this last king, in whose reign the events of Book 23 of his *History of Persia* take place.

F33b. Diodorus, 14.46.6 {cf. Testimonium 9} {L}

Ctesias the historian ended his account of the *History of Persia* in this year {i.e. 398/7 BCE}, having begun with Ninus and Semiramis.

116 The parasang was a Persian unit of measurement. Herodotus (5.53) tells us that it is equal to 30 stadia (that is to say 18,000 feet: appx. 5.5 km or 3.5 miles) though some other writers differ on this point. In the same passage, Herodotus also gives five parasangs as the distance that a man might expect on cover in a day (presumably travelling on foot). The Bactra mentioned here is the city that Ctesias says was founded by Semiramis in F1b §6.2.

117 Namely the Assyrian, Median, Persian, Macedonian, and Roman – though, of course, the latter two will not have been mentioned by Ctesias, since they postdate the time at which he was writing.

MISCELLANEOUS COMMENTS ON THE PERSIAN EMPIRE

THE COWS OF SUSA

F34a. Aelian, *On the Nature of Animals*, 7.1

I have learnt that the oxen at Susa are not without skill in arithmetic. And the proof that what I have said is not simply a boast is the story which says that that in Susa the King had a number of oxen in his parks, which emptied 100 pitchers of water each onto its most arid areas. And whether this labour is innate to them or has become inculcated over a long period, they accomplish it most willingly, and you would not see one shirking. But if you were to press them to draw up just one bucket in addition to the aforementioned 100, you will not persuade or compel them – neither by beating nor flattering them. So says Ctesias.

F34b. Plutarch, *On the Cleverness of Animals,* 21 p. 974 de

Although these are marvels, they are less marvellous when compared with creatures which possess an idea of number and an ability with arithmetic, like the oxen of Susa. For there are oxen there which water the royal park by means of pivoted buckets, the number of which is fixed. For each ox carries 100 buckets each day. And it is not possible to get them to carry more – and it is not even possible for someone so wishing to force them to do it – and although they often add one as an experiment, the ox stands its ground and refuses to move once it has reached the appointed number, so accurately does it add together and recall the total, as Ctesias of Cnidus has recorded.

RIVER SNAKES

F35. Aelian, *On the Nature of Animals*, 16.42

However, Ctesias says that near Sittace in Persia there is a river called Argades. There are, then, a number of snakes in it, whose bodies are black – except their heads, which are white. These snakes grow to up to six feet in length. And those who are bitten by them die. And they are not seen by day since they swim under water, but by night they kill those who come to fetch water or wash their clothes. Many suffer this fate either through need of water, because their supplies have run out, or because they are unable to wash their clothes during the day, being otherwise occupied.

THE WALLS OF ECBATANA

F36. Antigonus Carystius, *Collection of Miraculous Stories* (*Historiarum mirabilium collectio*), 15 {cf. Testimonium 11c}

And Ctesias relates that in Ecbatana and Persia there is something very similar to this.[118] But because he tells a lot of lies, we have omitted the extract. For it seemed far-fetched.

ROYAL WATER FROM THE RIVER CHOASPES

F37. Athenaeus, 2.23 p.45ab

The Persian King, as Herodotus says in his first book, 'takes with him, to drink, water from the Choaspes which flows near Susa; and the King drinks only this. After this water had been refined, an enormous number of four-wheeled chariots, drawn by mules, accompanied him, transporting the water in silver urns.' Ctesias of Cnidus also records how this royal water is boiled and how it is stored in urns and carried for the King, saying that it is both extremely light and very pleasant.

CARMANIAN OIL

F38. Athenaeus, 2.74 p.67a

Ctesias says that there is acanthus oil in Carmania, which the King uses.

118 See note 11.

THE ROYAL DINNER

F39. Athenaeus, 4.27 p.146c

The Persian King, so Ctesias and Dinon say in their *History of Persia*, used to dine with 15,000 men and would spend 400 talents on the meal.

POTTERY CUPS AT THE KING'S TABLE

F40. Athenaeus, 11.11 p.464a

We should decline cups made of pottery. For Ctesias says, 'Among the Persians, whoever the King holds in low esteem uses cups made of pottery.'

THE GRIEF OF A WOMAN

F41. Hesychius, *Lexicon*, s.v. σάραπις

sarapis: a Persian tunic shot with white thread, according to Ctesias, 'And after ripping her *sarapis* to pieces, she let down her hair and started tearing at it and crying out.'

CTESIAS' SPELLING OF ECBATANA

F42. Stephanus of Byzantium, s.v. Ἀγβάτανα

Agbatana: (. . .) Demetrius says that there are two Agbatanas, one in Media, the other in Syria. Throughout his *History of Persia*, Ctesias spells the Agbatana in Media with an alpha [a]; But the ancients spelt the name of the Persian city with an epsilon [e], as will be demonstrated.

CTESIAS' SPELLING OF DERBICES

F43. Stephanus of Byzantium, s.v. Δερβίκκαι

Derbices (*Derbikkai*): a tribe neighbouring the Hyrcanians. Apollonius spells it correctly with two kappas [k]. Ctesias calls them Derbisses (*Derbissoi*) or Terbisses (*Terbissoi*).

PERSIAN MOTHER-SON INCEST

F44a. Tertullian, *The Appeal to the Nations* (*Ad nationes*), 1.16

Ctesias also relates that the Persians freely consort with their mothers both knowingly and without revulsion.

F44b. Tertullian, *Apologeticus*, 9

Ctesias reports that the Persians sleep with their own mothers.

GLOSSARY OF AUTHORS

Aelian (Claudius Aelianus, 165/70–230/5 CE)
A freedman from Praeneste. His native language was Latin, although he wrote exclusively in Greek. While influenced by the Second Sophistic, Aelian was not known as a Sophist, and his best known works are collections of anecdotes on a wide variety of topics. His knowledge can often be superficial, although he was widely read in later antiquity and was admired for the purity of his Attic Greek.
Ctesian citations in: ***On the Nature of Animals*** and ***Historical Miscellany***.

Aeneas of Gaza (d. *c.*518 CE)
A Neo-Platonic philosopher, turned Christian, a student of Heirocles of Alexandria. His Platonic beliefs often came into conflict with his Christianity, and he rejected the Neo-Platonic idea of the pre-existence of souls.
Ctesian citations in: ***Theophrastus***.

Agathias (532–580 CE)
An early Byzantine historian-cum-poet from Constantinople, although born in Myrina in Asia Minor. As a historian, he expanded on and continued Procopius' *History of the Wars*. The work is highly rhetorical and full of digressions – the most notable on the Franks and the Sasanids of Persia.
Ctesian citations in: ***Histories***.

Antigonus of Carystus (fl. *c.*240 BCE)
A bronzeworker turned author who worked in Athens and, perhaps, Pergamum. He was the author of biographies, art-historical studies, and of a collection of anecdotes of paradoxical stories.
Ctesian citations in: ***Collection of Miraculous Stories*** (***Historiarum mirabilium collectio***).

Apollonius (? 2nd cent. BCE)
A paradoxographer who utilized earlier works.
Ctesian citations in: ***Miraculous Histories*** (***Historiai thaumasiai***).

Aristotle (384–322 BCE)
Born in Chalcidice, and raised perhaps at Pella, Aristotle arrived in Athens at the age of 17 to study at Plato's Academy. The influence of Plato upon his work is obvious. Aristotle's work constitutes the largest surviving philosophical œuvre from antiquity, since he lectured in science, metaphysics, physics, biology, psychology, ethics, politics, cosmology, logic, rhetoric, poetics, and the theory of knowledge.
Ctesian citations in: ***History of Animals*** (***Historia animalium***), ***On the Generation of Animals*** and ***Politics***.

Arnobius (d. *c.*330 CE)
A teacher of rhetoric during the reign of Diocletian (CE 284–305), he wrote works that proved his rejection of paganism and his wholehearted conversion to Christianity. His works show little understanding of Christian theology, but he does provide useful evidence for the kinds of pagan beliefs current during his career.
Ctesian citations in: ***Against the Pagans***.

Arrian (Lucius Flavius Arrianus, *c.*86–160 CE)
Born in Bithynia and raised to the position of legate of Cappadocia, Arrian regarded himself as a second Xenophon and modelled himself on the historians of Classical Greece. Although he wrote essays on hunting and military tactics, he is best known as a historian. He composed histories of Bithynia and India, of Trajan's Parthian campaigns and, of course, the reign of Alexander the Great (and its aftermath). More concerned with style than substance, Arrian's works are littered with errors but remain highly readable.
Ctesian citations in: ***Anabasis of Alexander*** and ***History of India***.

Apines of Gadara (fl. *c.*230 CE)
Apines' treaty on rhetoric provides evidence for how Greek rhetoric was taught in the early centuries of the Roman Empire. It demonstrates a continued development of a long-established Aristotelian tradition.
Ctesian citations in: ***Art of Rhetoric.***

Athenaeus (fl. *c.*200 CE)
From Naurcatis, Athenaeus was a Greek rhetorician and grammarian. His one great work is a vital tool in understanding ancient literary and cultural history, since it contains over a thousand quotations from hundreds of ancient authors ranging in date from Homer to Athenaeus' own time. Main themes include information on philosophy, women and courtesans, Persian and other Oriental monarchs, tyrants, fish, wine, dancing, parody, and much more.
Ctesian citations in: ***The Banquet of the Philosophers*** (***Deipnosophistae***).

Athenagoras of Athens (*c.*133–190 CE)
A Christian apologist whose works defended Christians against charges of atheism and cannibalism. His works use Classical texts to justify and explain Christian practice.
Ctesian citations in: ***Embassy for the Christians***.

Aulus Gellius (*c.*125–180 CE)
Latin author and grammarian, possibly of African origin, his one surviving work comprises a collection of short chapters based on notes he made in reading a great variety of topics – history, philosophy, law, and literary criticism. It is invaluable for the insight it affords into the nature of the society and pursuits of the times, and for its many excerpts from works of lost or fragmentary ancient authors.
Ctesian citations in: ***Attic Nights***.

Clement of Alexandria (Titus Flavius Clemens, *c.*150–216 CE)
A Christian convert but well versed in pagan literature. His main works deal with the religious basis of Christian morality and individual cases of conduct. He is regarded as one of the early Church Fathers.
Ctesian citations in: ***Miscellanies*** (***Stromateis***).

Demetrius (*c.*1st cent. BCE–1st cent. CE)
An author of a handbook on rhetoric and literary style who amassed examples from earlier poets and orators.
Ctesian citations in: ***On Style***.

Diodorus (Diodorus Siculus) (fl. 1st cent. BCE)
Sicilian author of a forty-book world history, which deals also with geography and mythology. It is the most extensive extant Greek history and draws on a wide range of earlier sources which are often quoted verbatim. See main text, pp. 38–40.
Ctesian citations in: ***Library*** (***Bibliothēkē***).

Dionysius of Halicarnassus (*c.*60 BCE–after 7 BCE)
Greek literary critic and the author of a Roman history. Often long-winded, he discusses the nature of historical writing and was particularly critical of the literary style of Thucydides. He understood the importance of combining history writing with good rhetoric and aesthetics.
Ctesian citations in: ***On Literary Composition***.

Eratosthenes of Cyrene (*c.*285–194 BCE)
A pupil of Callimachus and the head of the Library of Alexandria. A mathematician, philosopher, and chronographer, he often published his work in poetic form. While he prided himself as a literary scholar, he was nicknamed 'Beta' (Number Two) because he was regarded as the also-ran in intellectual fields.
Ctesian citations in: ***Placing Among the Stars*** (***Katasterismoi***).

Eusebius of Caesarea (*c.*263–339 CE)
The so-called Father of Ecclesiastical History, he carried on the tradition of Christian scholarship that had been started by Origen. His literary output was prodigious and he worked on both church histories and theological treatises.
Ctesian citations in: ***Chronicle and Chronography*** and ***Preparation for the Gospel***.

Galen (*c.*129–210 CE)
A doctor from Pergamon and the founder of an influential medical tradition that dominated Eastern and Western medicinal practice until the Enlightenment. The author of books on logic, ethics, philosophy, philology and, of course, medicine, he frequently drew on Hippocratic practices as his key authority.
Ctesian citations in: ***Commentaries on Book 6 of Hippocrates'*** **Epidemics** and ***On Hippocrates' Book*** **'On Joints' (de articulis)**.

George Syncellus (d. after 810 CE)
A Byzantine chronicler and ecclesiastic who took holy orders. His one great work, possibly written at Constantinople, is more of a chronological table with notes than a history *per se*. The work, written between 873 CE and 875 CE, nonetheless spread George's preferred dates for historical events through the West.
Ctesian citations in: ***Extract of Chronography*** (***Ecloga Chronographica***).

Hesychius of Alexandria (fl. *c.*5th cent. CE)
Author of a huge Greek lexicon of rare words found in poetry and various Greek dialects, and based upon earlier specialist lexica. The work is of great value for the study of Greek dialects and poetic criticism.
Ctesian citations in: ***Lexicon***.

Hyginus (Gaius Iulius Hyginus, *c.*64 BCE–17 CE)
Spanish born freedman of Augustus and the head of the Palatine Library. Scholarship is divided as to the nature and number of his works. Under the name of Hyginus there are extant what are probably two sets of school notes abbreviating his treatises on mythology; one is a collection of *Fabulae* ('stories'), the other an 'Astronomy' in poetry. He also wrote on history, archaeology, literary criticism, and agriculture.
Ctesian citations in: ***Astronomy***.

Lucian (*c.*125–after 180 CE)
Accomplished wit and rhetorician of the Second Sophistic. His eighty works (most of which can certainly be attributed to him) in Greek (his native language was probably Aramaic) are difficult to categorize. Most are literary dialogues which fuse together elements of Old and New Comedy with popular philosophy. At best he is cultivated and cynical, although his works can be somewhat repetitive.
Ctesian citations in: ***True Histories***, ***Lover of Lies*** (***Philopseudes***) and ***How to Write History***.

Nicolas of Damascus (*c.*64 BCE–after 8 CE)
An educated Jew and courtier-*philos* (friend) of Herod the Great of Judaea; he was the tutor to the children of Cleopatra VII and Marc Antony. His vast 144 book-long history covered the period from earliest antiquity to the reign of Herod (74–4 BCE). It is best known today as a source for Josephus' *Jewish Antiquities*. See main text, pp. 36–38.
Ctesian citations in: ***Universal History*** (***Historiai***).

Papyrus Oxyrhynchus
Oxyrhynchus was a nome-capital west of the Nile in Lower Egypt. Excavated from the late nineteenth century, the city's ancient rubbish mounds have revealed masses of papyri dating from the Ptolemaic, Roman, and Byzantine periods. Over 70 per cent of surviving literary papyri come from Oxyrhynchus.
Ctesian citations in: ***Papyrus Oxyrhynchus*** 2330.

Paradoxographus florentinus (Pseudo-Sotion) (fl. *c.*200–170 BCE)
Possibly a peripatetic born in Alexandria and possibly the author of the *Succession of Philosophers*.

Photius (*c.*810–893 CE)
Byzantine scholar and Patriarch of Constantinople. Author of a Lexicon and a great bibliophile. See main text, pp. 43–45.
Ctesian citations in: ***Library***

Pliny the Elder (Gaius Plinius Secundus, 23/4–79 CE)
A prominent Roman equestrian and the author of a vast thirty-seven-book natural history as well as studies of military tactics.
Ctesian citations in: ***Natural History***.

Plutarch (L .(?) Mestrius Plutarchus *c.*50–120 CE)
Born in Chaeronea, Plutarch travelled extensively collecting materials for his works and lecturing in some of the ancient world's most important cultural centres. He was a Platonist and a teacher of philosophy and wrote numerous treatises on themes of popular morality. He is best known for his biographical studies of the great men of antiquity. See main text, pp. 40–43.
Ctesian citations in: ***Life of Artaxerxes*** and ***On the Cleverness of Animals***.

Pollux (Iulius Pollux, fl. 200 CE)
Born in Naucratis, and chair of rhetoric at Athens. His masterwork (surviving in fragments and *epitomes*) is a dictionary of Greek and Latin words and terms.
Ctesian citations in: ***Onomasticon***.

Polyaenus of Macedon (fl. 140 CE)
A rhetorician whose only surviving work, dedicated to Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus, is a wide-ranging account of the exploits of gods and heroes as well as the military tactics of great leaders such as Hannibal, Caesar, and Augustus.
Ctesian citations in: ***Strategems***.

Stephanus of Byzantium (fl. *c.*550 CE)
A Christian Greek grammarian and teacher in Constantinople. The author of a sixty-book *Ethnica*, a list of place names, including their foundation legends, etymologies, and historical anecdotes.
Ctesian citations in: ***Peoples and Places*** (***Ethnica***).

Strabo (64 BCE–24 CE)
Born in Amaseia into a prominent family from Pontus, he studied grammar under Aristodemus of Nysa before moving to Rome. The author of seventeen books of geography, which emphasize the importance of geography for statesmen.
Ctesian citations in: ***Geography***.

Suda
The name of a lexicon, not an author; compiled in the late tenth century CE, it is a compilation of compilations drawing on Greek texts from Homer onwards.

Tertullian (Quintus Septimius Florens Tertullianus, *c.*160–240 CE)
A Christian born near Carthage, the son of a centurion, he defended Christianity against pagan charges of black magic and sedition. His works are devoted to Christian ethical problems.
Ctesian citations in: ***The Appeal to the Nations*** (***Ad nationes***) and ***Apologeticus***.

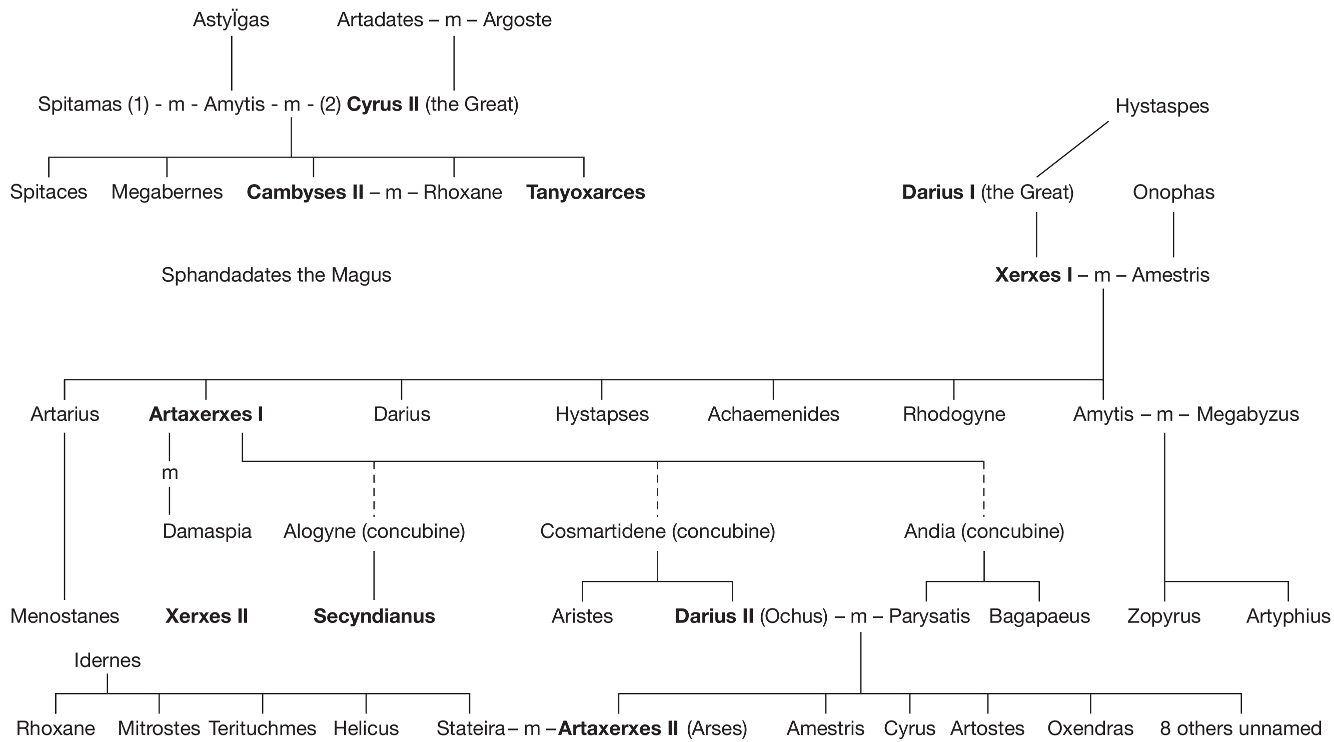
Theon of Alexandria (fl. *c.*60 CE)
A rhetor said to have written works on Xenophon, Isocrates, and Demosthenes, as well as a study of rhetoric. His *Progymnasmata* is the earliest surviving example of the genre.
Ctesian citations in: ***Preliminary Exercises*** (***Progymnasmata***).

Tzetzes (Johannes Tzetzes, fl. 12th cent. CE)
Byzantine polymath, the author of a commentary on Homer, and scholia on Hesiod, Aristophanes, Lycophron, and others. His greatest work *Histories*, known by the name of its first editor, Chiliades, is a review of Greek literature and learning, quoting over 400 authors.
Ctesian citations in: ***Chiliades***.

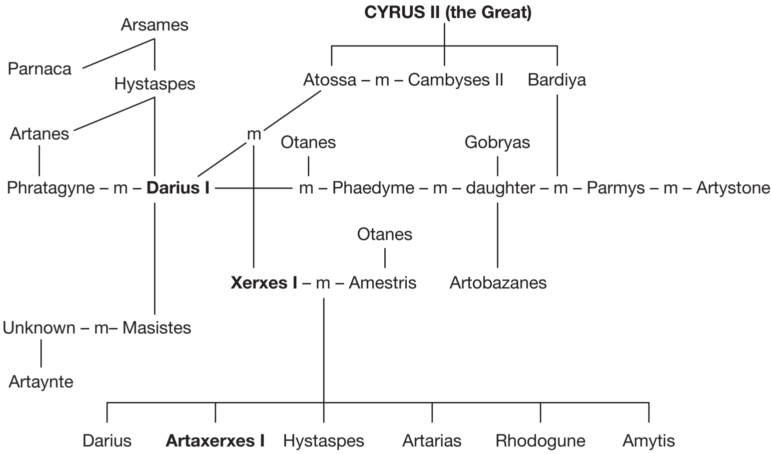
Xenophon (*c.*430–354 BCE)
Athenian born cavalryman, soldier, philosopher, and author of numerous important works about Athenian life. He travelled widely throughout the Persian Empire and wrote on its affairs and its history.
Ctesian citations in: ***Anabasis***.

GENEALOGY OF THE PERSIAN ROYAL FAMILY

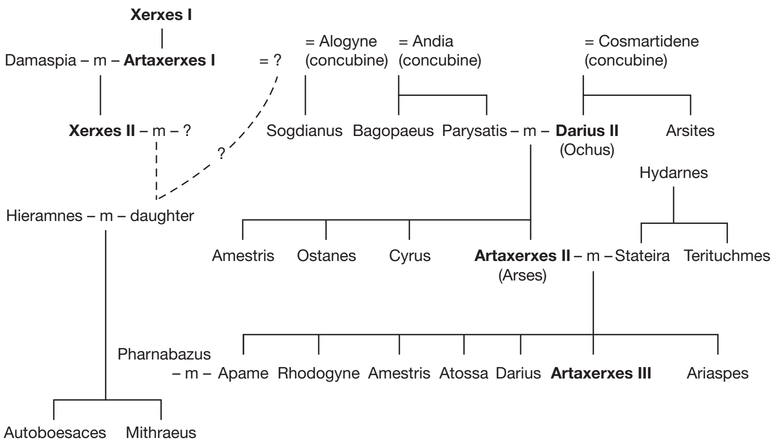
The Persian royal family according to Ctesias' *Persica*



Achaemenid family tree I: the family of Xerxes I



Achaemenid family tree II: the family of Artaxerxes II





The Persian Empire under Darius I

After Kuhrt, A., *The Persian Empire*, Routledge, London, 2007


ARAL SEA
CASPIAN SEA
PERSIAN GULF
Jaxartes
(Syr Darya)
Oxus
(Amu Darya)
MASSAGETAE
SAKA HAUMAVARGA
CHORASMIA
Cyropolis
FERGHANA
SAKA TIGRAKHAUDA
SOGDIANA
Pamirs
Merv
Bactra
MARGIANA
BACTRIA
HYRCANIA
Hindu Kush
Himalayas
Mt Damavand
Rayy
PARTHIA
ARIA
Peshawar
GANDARA
DRANGIANA
PUNJAB
Zagros Mts
ARACHOSIA
Kandahar
Dahan-i Ghulaman
KHUZESTAN
SATTAGYDIA?
Multan
Helmand
Pasargadae
Anshan
Persepolis
SISTAN
Indus
PARSA/PERSIS
INDIA
CARMANIA
GEDROSIA
SIND
Land over 1,000 metres
SCALE
0 200 400 600 800 1000 km
0 200 400 600 miles
50°E 55°E 60°E 65°E 70°E 75°E 80°E
45°N 40°N 35°N 30°N 25°N 20°N 15°N
H J K L M N
a b c d e f g

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